

Library Space Needs Assessment

December 2021



service

multi-purpose



Monteith Brown
planning consultants



Ajax Public Library

Library Space Needs Assessment

December 9, 2021



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1.0

Introduction

1.1 Library Space Needs Assessment

The **Library Space Needs Assessment** (the “Needs Assessment”) directs how Ajax Public Library and the Town of Ajax may invest in library space through existing branches and potential development of new space(s). The Needs Assessment provides a refreshed implementation strategy to chart a course for Ajax Public Library to the year 2031.

Over the past 10 years, the Ajax Public Library Master Plan has helped to rationalize selected capital investments in the Library system through opening of the Audley Branch in 2019 as well as a renovation of the Main Branch in 2014. Today, Ajax Public Library provides 55,200 square feet (5,130 square metres) of space across its Main Branch, Audley Branch, McLean Branch and the Library’s Business Office; the Village Branch was closed in 2019 to coincide with the opening of Audley Branch.

Ajax’s population is estimated to grow from 132,000 at present time to 137,670 by the year 2031. Proactive planning is necessary for Ajax Public Library to effectively deliver on its mandate to serve the needs of a growing community.

1.2 Ajax Public Library Master Plan

The Ajax Public Library Master Plan¹ articulated 105 recommendations guiding Library space and services between the years 2011 and 2026. Recommendation #46 of the Master Plan identified the need to “Conduct a Space Needs Assessment” which is the purpose of this current Library Space Needs Assessment. The Library Master Plan is planned to be updated in 2022 and will utilize information contained in this Needs Assessment.

As a part of the existing Ajax Public Library Master Plan, a vision was established to provide the organization with a roadmap for the future. The vision describes the desired state of Ajax Public Library including what amenities, programs and services should be offered and other key characteristics. The vision for Ajax Public Library is described on the following page and will be revisited as part of the planned 2023 Library Master Plan.



Main Branch



Audley Branch



McLean Branch

Ajax Public Library Vision

The Ajax Public Library reflects and supports the goals of the Town and the community within which it resides. It is a completely accessible, integrated and seamless community information service with several service points conveniently located throughout the Town. Through a combination of virtual services and physical spaces, multiple resources are accessible from home, the office or any location where the user may be.

The Library serves a 24/7 community with research collections access, training offered by staff, and recreational and informational pursuits including programs developed in partnership with many other community agencies. Local to global cultural and local history interests are highlighted through an onsite physical and virtual art gallery, book talks and book signings, musical performances and social receptions.

Quiet, contemplative areas are available at all physical locations and, where possible, outdoor reading gardens are adjacent to all locations and accessible for the community. All locations are comfortable, yet vibrant with colour, fully accessible, encouraging anyone to stay and enjoy.

Responding to their diverse information usage, youth enjoy a full array of library and community services and spaces including quiet individual and interactive work spaces, as well as gaming, music, recreational and informative products and services.

Newcomers recognize the Library as the community place to go for any information that helps them acclimatize to and integrate into the dynamic Ajax community.

Virtual services provide a wide range of community and global partnerships through the full range of social networking tools and services, more formal virtual conferencing, distance training and resourcing.

Library staff, possessing community development and customer service skill sets, offers services comfortably in a variety of ways, be it training for self-serve to one-on-one assistance, on site or through well-established outreach networks. The Ajax Public Library is a hub in a dynamic regional library network that serves all regional residents and beyond.

~ New Communities, New Horizons:
Ajax Public Library Master Plan, 2011-2026

1.3 Town of Ajax Strategic Plan

The Ajax Strategic Plan outlines goals and initiatives to be achieved within the coinciding term of Town Council (2018 to 2022). The Town's Strategic Plan is organized under three Focus Areas:

- 1) Connecting our Community;
- 2) Investing in our Community; and
- 3) Leading in our Community.

The Strategic Plan contains a number of actions attributable to Library system, including a specific reference that states *“Expand inclusion programming at the Ajax Public Library”* that is found in the Connecting Our Community Focus Area.² The Needs Assessment takes this into account as there may be space implications to be considered; for example, spaces may be required for programs that engage culturally and socio-economically diverse communities while ensuring appropriate design standards are in place to include persons with disabilities.



1.4 Town of Ajax Official Plan

The Ajax Official Plan is the Town's legal framework for land use planning that guides how Ajax grows and develops. The Official Plan directs where development will occur and the types of land uses that are permitted including areas for housing, employment, education, parks and public facilities such as libraries. Policies for community facilities – which include libraries – are contained in Section 3.4.5 of the Ajax Official Plan.

Town of Ajax Official Plan

3.4.5 Community Facilities

- a) Community facilities may be permitted within all land use designations, with the exception of the Environmental Protection designation.

Community facilities limited to trails, trailheads and other appropriate forms of development may be permitted within the Environmental Protection designation, subject to adequate review and study to confirm, to the satisfaction of the Conservation Authority, that any proposed community facilities will not adversely impact the natural environment and are compatible with the surrounding area.

- b) The Town recognizes that urban intensification will, over time, require that community facilities be enhanced to recognize increases in population density and changes in usage patterns without necessarily any increase in lands set aside for such community facilities. Therefore, the Town will need to ensure that existing and planned community facilities have the potential to intensify and adjust their programming to match the needs of the population over time.
- c) The Town will plan for a distribution of community facilities throughout the municipality. The Town will ensure that community facilities are well served by transit and that they become key destinations on the Town's walkway and trails network.
- d) **The Town's objective for Library facilities is to provide library space at a rate of 0.06 square metres per person (0.6 square feet per person), and that library facilities be distributed throughout the Town in key, highly accessible locations.**

1.5 Planning Methodology

The Needs Assessment was led by Ajax Public Library with the assistance of Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. In accordance with the project's Terms of Reference, notable elements of the planning process included:

- Regular meetings with the Library's Project Team that is responsible for overseeing the project, reviewing deliverables, and providing guidance to the consultant;
- Engagement of the Ajax Public Library Board at critical points in the process;
- Review of relevant research, local and national trends, Ajax's community demographics, and plans and studies including those prepared by Ajax Public Library and the Town of Ajax;
- Community and stakeholder engagement through the use of surveys, workshops, interviews, and public information centres;
- Review of existing libraries through site tours and branch-specific information provided to accompany an assessment of current and future space needs; and
- Preparation of three key deliverables being this Insights Report, a Draft Needs Assessment and the Final Needs Assessment.



Main Branch Customer Service Desk

1.6 Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Needs Assessment was initiated during the COVID-19 global pandemic that has had a significant impact on national, provincial and local economies. Public health measures in place since the onset of the pandemic have affected the way in which libraries are delivering services. Current Provincial public health plans have allowed economic activity to resume and limited social gatherings to take place including the re-opening of many library facilities with modified operating practices related to physical distancing and hygiene.

In order to curb the rate of transmission, the Province enacted a number of measures throughout 2020 and 2021 that caused library systems to change the way services are provided to the public. Libraries remained open under stringent operating conditions, limiting the number of patrons permitted to enter the premises only for the purposes of contactless drop-off and pick-up of previously reserved materials, or to access computers, photocopiers or similar services. Provincial stay-at-home orders also required library branches to close in-person visits from the public. The continually and rapidly evolving situation resulting from the pandemic illustrates that public health response measures may again change as the master planning process progresses over the next number of months.

Ajax Public Library has reopened to the public for study as of time of writing for computer use, in-person pick-up and browsing. Curb-side pickup for collections and program materials continue to be offered as a customer service option. Health and safety measures have been put into place for in-person visits including mask requirements and social distancing, as well as enhanced cleaning protocols consistent with provincial and regional public health guidelines.

The pandemic has had a number of implications on the Needs Assessment planning process. Community engagement activities were carried out using online formats due to provincial restrictions placed on public gatherings. Project Team meetings have been conducted virtually while telephone and video-conferences have been used for interviews, workshops and focus groups.

The disruptive nature of COVID-19 along with shutdowns mandated by senior levels of government significantly skew Library attendance, circulation and other data for 2020 and 2021 in comparison to past years. Accordingly, the analysis of many Needs Assessment components will rely upon data compiled for 2019 and earlier.

Ajax Public Library is monitoring regional and provincial COVID-19 protocols and are continually developing plans to deliver services in accordance with the guidelines that are being established and updated by senior levels of government and public health agencies. While the future impacts of COVID-19 on the Library system are unknown, Ajax Public Library is committed to working diligently to address the new challenges presented by the pandemic.



2.0

Community Profile Snapshot

2.1 Selected Demographic Indicators

Socio-demographic characteristics are influencing factors of the Ajax Public Library system, particularly in understanding how much capacity is required to service needs and informing what components should be included within Library spaces.

- **Current Population:** the Town of Ajax’s 2021 population is estimated to be 132,000 persons³ for the purposes of the Needs Assessment.
- **Forecasted Population:** the Town’s population is projected to reach 137,670 persons⁴ by the end of the master planning period in the year 2031, in accordance with the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This represents growth of approximately 5,700 persons (4%) above the 2021 population estimate.
- **Population Intensification:** based on the current supply of developable land and provincial legislation, new population growth can be expected to shift from traditional ‘greenfield’ areas (that have been found north of Rossland Road in the past 15 years) towards established areas of Ajax. In particular, residential densities are expected to increase in the Downtown and Uptown Regional Centres, near the GO Transit Station, and along the Kingston Road corridor. Table 2 of the Town of Ajax Official Plan provides forecasted population break-outs by neighbourhood for the year 2031 (the Town is also presently undertaking a Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation Strategy (CAISTS) that will provide additional insight into intensification-related growth once complete.
- **Age Structure:** Based on 2016 Census data, Ajax has a younger median and average age in relation to Durham Region and Ontario. Approximately one in four residents (27%) are below 20 years of age, half (50%) are between 20 and 54 years of age, and another one in four residents (24%) are 55 years of age and over. Current and projected age-specific population data was not available at time of writing.
- **Cultural Diversity:** Approximately four out of 10 residents are immigrants, the majority of whom have lived in Canada for more than 10 years. The Town’s largest source of immigration comes from Jamaica as well as Asian countries including Sri Lanka, India, Philippines, and Pakistan. Further, 57% of Ajax residents belong to racialized groups.

132,000
2021 Population Estimate

137,670
2031 Population Estimate

39%
of residents were born outside
of Canada

3.0

Ajax Public Library Branch Profiles

Ajax Public Library operates three library branches that encompasses a gross floor area of 53,600 square feet (4,980 square metres). Based on the 2021 population estimate, Ajax Public Library achieves a service level of one branch per 44,000 residents and provides library space at a rate of 0.41 square feet (0.04 square metres) per person, which is below the target established in the Town of Ajax Official Plan (0.6 square feet or 0.06 square metres per person).

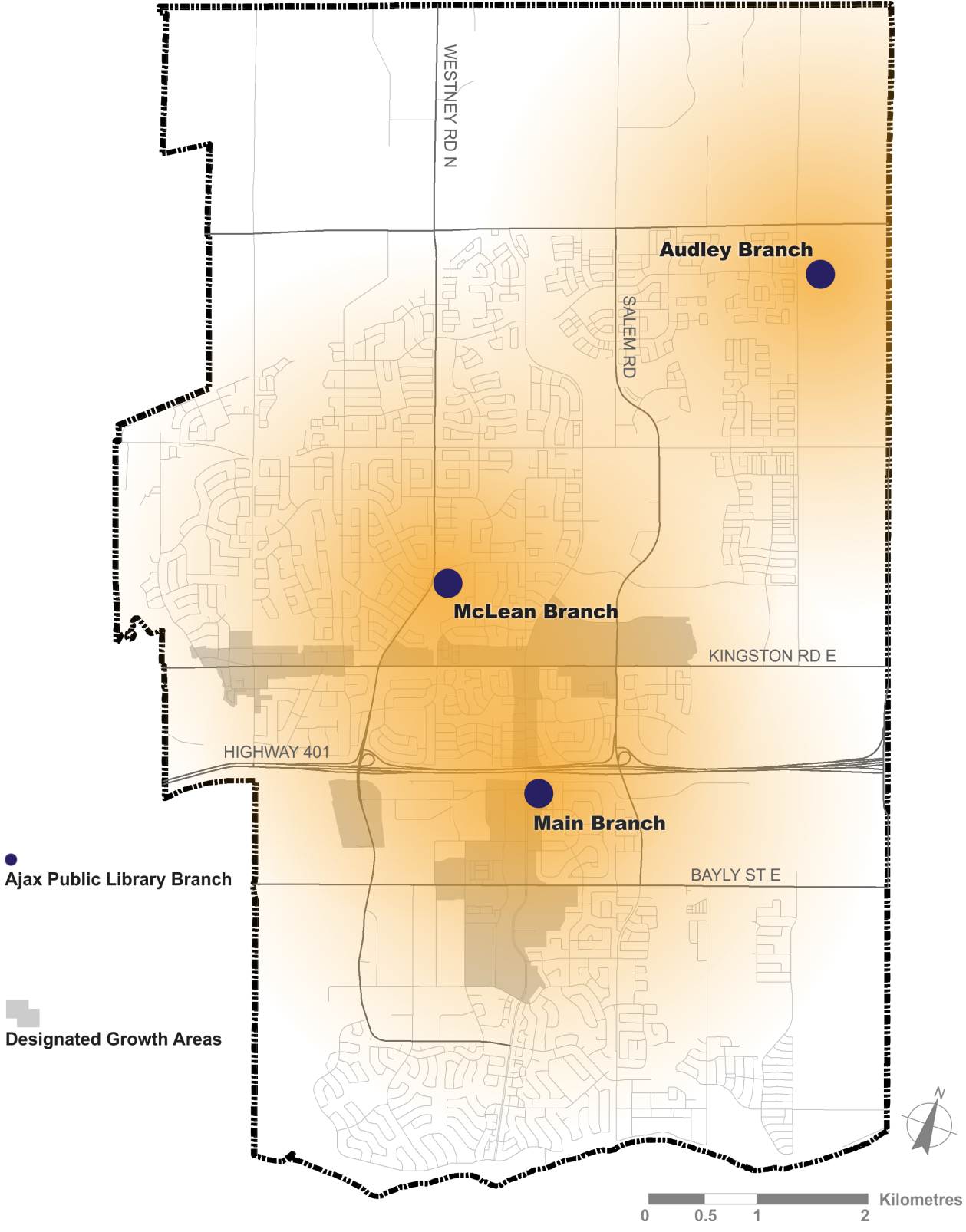
Note that the above noted figures exclude 1,600 square feet of administrative space at the Library Business Office. If included, the 55,200 square feet of library space nominally increases the service level to 0.42 square feet per capita. Summary snapshots of each Ajax Public Library location are provided in the pages that follow.

"I feel that Public Library [sic] are one of the most important resources in a community and I am proud of our local Libraries. Keep up the great work!"

~ Resident Comment



Figure 1: Distribution of Ajax Public Library Branches



3.1 Main Branch

Main Branch is a standalone library located at the southeast corner of Harwood Avenue East and Achilles Road in the Town's Downtown Regional Centre. Main Branch is located adjacent to the Ajax Public Library Business Office and forms part of the Town Hall and Arbour Park campus, the latter of which contains an outdoor pool, splash pad, and playground.

Main Branch is Ajax Public Library's largest branch with 33,000 square feet (3,066 square metres) of space containing children and teen spaces, a study room, multi-purpose rooms, collections area, computer stations, and administration space.

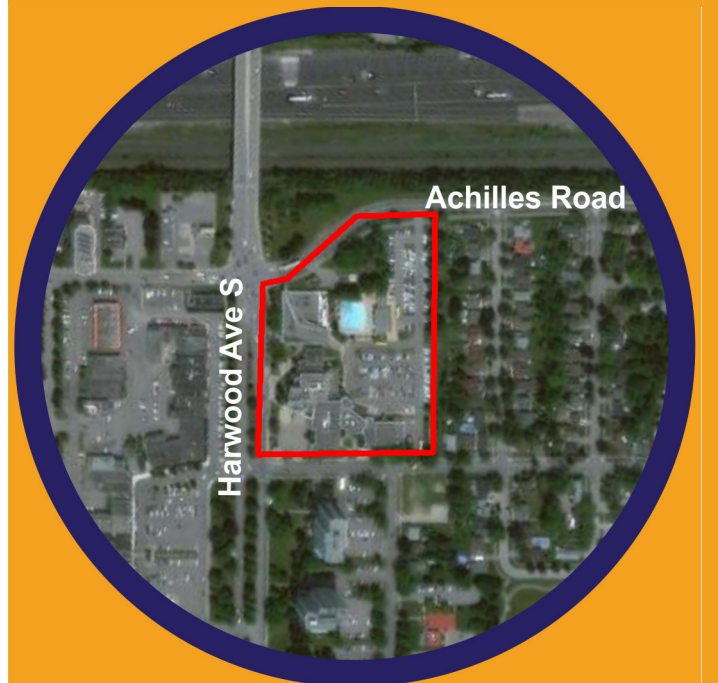
In the pre-pandemic years between 2017 and 2019, the following trends were observed at Main Branch:

- In-person visits declined by 16% to 239,983, amounting to 7.3 visits per square foot.
- New Library card registrations increased by 39% to 5,199 cards.
- The 110,648 materials in the collection result in 3.4 items per square foot (2020 data).
- The number of adult and children's programs offered increased by 9% to 1,265; program attendance increased by 33% to 33,241 participants. The majority of this growth was driven by an increase in children's programming and participants.
- Reference inquiries declined by 16% to 35,913.
- Computer sessions declined by 43% to 29,211.

A building condition assessment completed in 2013 found the Main Branch to be in good condition. Capital projects identified through the building condition assessment included roof maintenance, glazing systems maintenance, exterior ceramic tile panel maintenance, exterior insulation finishing system maintenance and millwork maintenance. The Town has planned to undertake replacement of aging mechanical equipment in 2024, with \$225,000 allocated through the capital plan.

Key Facts

Year Opened:	2002
Major Renovation:	2014
Gross Floor Area:	33,000 ft² / 3,066 m²
2019 In-Person Visits:	240,000



3.2 Audley Branch

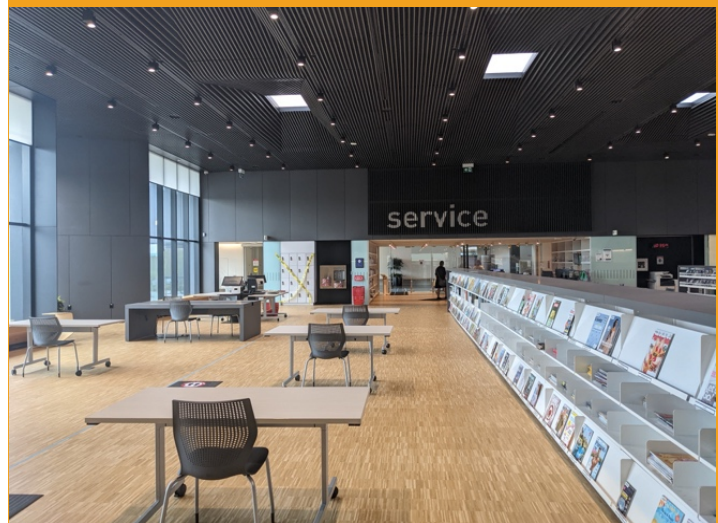
The Audley Branch is the newest library branch, constructed as part of the second phase of the Audley Recreation Centre in the northeast Ajax. Located at the southeast corner of Taunton Road and Audley Road, this Library branch is co-located with several community facilities including an indoor pool, gymnasium, fitness space, program rooms, a room dedicated to youth and older adult programs, skateboard park, splash pad, tennis court, basketball court, playground and trails.

The Audley Branch provides 15,000 square feet (1,394 square metres) of space and contains a collection of 50,873 materials (or 3.4 items per square foot). The Library branch offers children and teen spaces, children's program room, study area and rooms, multi-purpose room, collections area, lounge, computer stations, lobby, and administration space.

Audley Branch opened shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and thus Library Staff were unable to determine a true utilization profile and use potential. Opening in late 2019, the branch attracted 28,113 visitors and registered 502 new Library card holders within only 3 months of opening. Nearly 50 adult and children's programs were offered at this location that focused on adult learning, skill and community development, culture, early learning, instruction and more. These programs had a total attendance of 1,479 participants. Additionally, there were 870 reference inquiries and 892 computer sessions.

Key Facts

Year Opened:	2019
Gross Floor Area:	15,000 ft² / 1,394 m²
2019 In-Person Visits:	28,100



3.3 McLean Branch

The McLean Branch, integrated with the McLean Community Centre, is located on the southeast corner of Westney Road North and Magill Drive. This Library branch is co-located with other community facilities including an indoor pool, gymnasium, fitness centre, youth room, program rooms, sports fields, playground, splash pad, skateboard park, and basketball court. St. Jude Catholic School is also located adjacent to the McLean Branch.

The McLean Branch opened in 1994 alongside the community centre. As Ajax's smallest Library branch with 5,600 square feet (520 square metres) of space, its major spaces consist of the collections area, group study tables, computer stations and a small bank of study kiosks.

Prior to the pandemic between 2017 and 2019, the following trends were observed at McLean Branch:

- The number of visitors increased 15% to 173,081 people. This amounts to 31 visits per square foot, a level of intensity that is four times higher than Main Branch. Library Staff have anecdotally observed that many former users of the now-closed Village Branch have migrated to McLean Branch after its closure.
- New cardholders registered increased by 33% to 2,259.
- The 31,959 materials in the collection result in 5.7 items per square foot which is more than 1.5 times the rate at the other branches.
- The number of adult and children's programs offered declined marginally by 1%; the number of adult program attendees declined by 78% to 468, while the number of children attendees increased by 11% to 6,849.
- The number of reference inquiries increased by 7% to 12,902.
- The number of computer sessions declined by 44% to 16,304.

A building condition assessment completed in 2013 identified the Library to be in fair condition. The Town's capital plan has allocated \$1.1 million towards roof replacement and building envelope repairs, which are planned to be undertaken in 2023 and 2024.

Key Facts

Year Opened:	1994
Gross Floor Area:	5,600 ft² / 520 m²
2019 In-Person Visits:	173,100

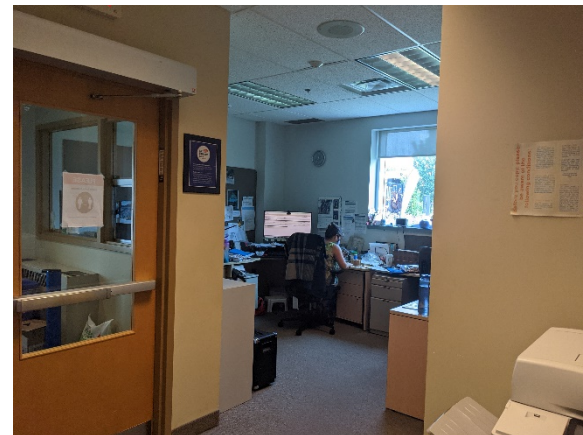


3.4 Ajax Public Library Business Office

Ajax Public Library corporate staff are separately housed in the Library Business Office building situated adjacent to the Main Branch. This 1,600 square foot space is relegated to supporting the Library's business functions and has become increasingly relied upon for storage in recent years as in-branch space constraints have grown due to greater focus on library collections, programming and community space. In addition, the Library's administrative storage was relocated into the Business Office in 2020, further constraining this area.

The Business Office is less of a public-facing space since it houses no collections nor is used for public programs. It does provide an important corporate function that does not consume valuable space within existing branches, thereby allowing them to allocate space to public services; however, discussions with Library Staff suggest that the physical separation is not always optimal when in-branch staff or library users wish to connect with senior management.

Library Staff indicate that the Business Office is at its capacity with no ability to provide additional staff space unless storage for filing, equipment, inter-branch deliveries, etc. can be moved to another location.





4.0

Library Facility Trends

4.1 The Importance of Libraries

Public libraries remain a core institution for Canadians, consistently evolving and innovating in line with rapid advances in technology world-wide. Canada's increasing shift towards a knowledge-based economy and the role of "creative industries" mean that public libraries play a pivotal role to their communities. Libraries are places of learning, creativity, socialization and collaboration among all facets of the population. Their position as critical focal points in the community remains though for somewhat different reasons than the past; libraries are utilized to fulfill objectives surrounding economic development and civic placemaking that contribute to the social, economic and cultural fabric of the community, which in turn has meant that the very way in which libraries operate in the modern age is different than in the past.

The transformative change experienced in modern libraries is driven by broad technological and societal trends. The development of mobile and portable technologies ranging from Wi-Fi to eBooks, tablets and smart phones is key to this. Equally important are social trends emphasizing creativity, social justice, experience, collaboration, sociability, community connection and lifelong learning. Such social and technological changes are unfolding and interacting in ways that are affecting customer experience, collections, community relationships and, in turn, physical space. The steady flow of in-person visits to Ajax Public Library branches and the growing use of digital resources illustrates the continued importance of the Library and its adaptiveness to current trends.

4.2 Libraries are Community Hubs

Public libraries are increasingly being recognized as a community destination and an attractive public space with an enjoyable atmosphere. Many libraries are embracing their role as a community hub and are focusing efforts to becoming civic integrators, particularly through partnerships and a focus on directly providing information or acting as a referral point for other civic services. The evolution of libraries as gateways and hubs of civic activity have resulted in non-traditional library spaces for creation, collaboration, socialization, and programming.

Ajax Public Library incorporates many of these elements across each branch to varying degrees although there is room for improvement in creating attractive public spaces with enjoyable areas at both the Main and McLean branches. The Library has formed relationships with community partners and agencies whose mandates and services are in alignment, utilizes program rooms to increase outreach, and has partnered with Town Departments to build and operate space.

Ajax Public Library incorporates many elements of community hubs across each branch though there is room to improve in creating attractive public spaces with enjoyable areas at the Main and McLean branches.

New library facilities are being internally and externally designed and built to be noticed in the community as a symbol of community pride. The design of the new Audley Branch is a good example of creating a quality architectural focal point that contributes visually – as well as functionally through services – to the surrounding neighbourhood. A library can represent a community at its best, and function as a civic landmark.

Although not the primary intent of Ajax Public Library’s service model, the use of the term “community hub” has gained much traction in recent years. As a place, a community hub is a central access point for a range of needed health and social services, along with cultural, recreational, and green spaces to nourish community life. A community hub can be a library, recreation centre, school, early learning centre, older adult centre, community health centre, place of worship, a gallery, archive, museum or another public space. This concept offers many social benefits, strengthens community cohesion, and fosters enhanced quality of life by providing a central location to deliver a range of services in consultation with the residents who will use them.

In 2015, the Province of Ontario published “Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan” to assist in the planning and delivery of integrated hub projects and has begun to offer partial funding to a number of initiatives. Implementation of community hub projects are beginning to be implemented across the Province, with some good examples emerging.

4.3 Libraries as Third Places

In *The Great Good Place*, sociologist Ray Oldenburg suggests that people need three places in their lives, with home as the “first place”, work/school as the “second place”, and an undefined “third place” that represents public life and community. Oldenburg writes: “The third place is a generic designation for a great variety of public spaces that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work.”

Fundamentally, third places are community spaces that are free or inexpensive, accessible, welcoming, and comfortable. People choose to visit and spend time in third places – they are not required to be there and can come and go as they please. Third places are warm and welcoming, and foster belonging and community pride. And third places are levelling spaces, where everyone is accepted, valued, and encouraged to participate, regardless of their background, identity, or socio-economic status.

Ajax Public Library plays an important role as a third place in the community that offers a safe and inclusive space that is welcoming of all residents, regardless of age, cultural background, orientation, income, gender identity, etc. Ajax Public Library spaces and services support civic engagement, social inclusion and equity, a culture of learning and multiple literacies, and economic vitality in the Town. Furthermore, the pandemic has resulted in

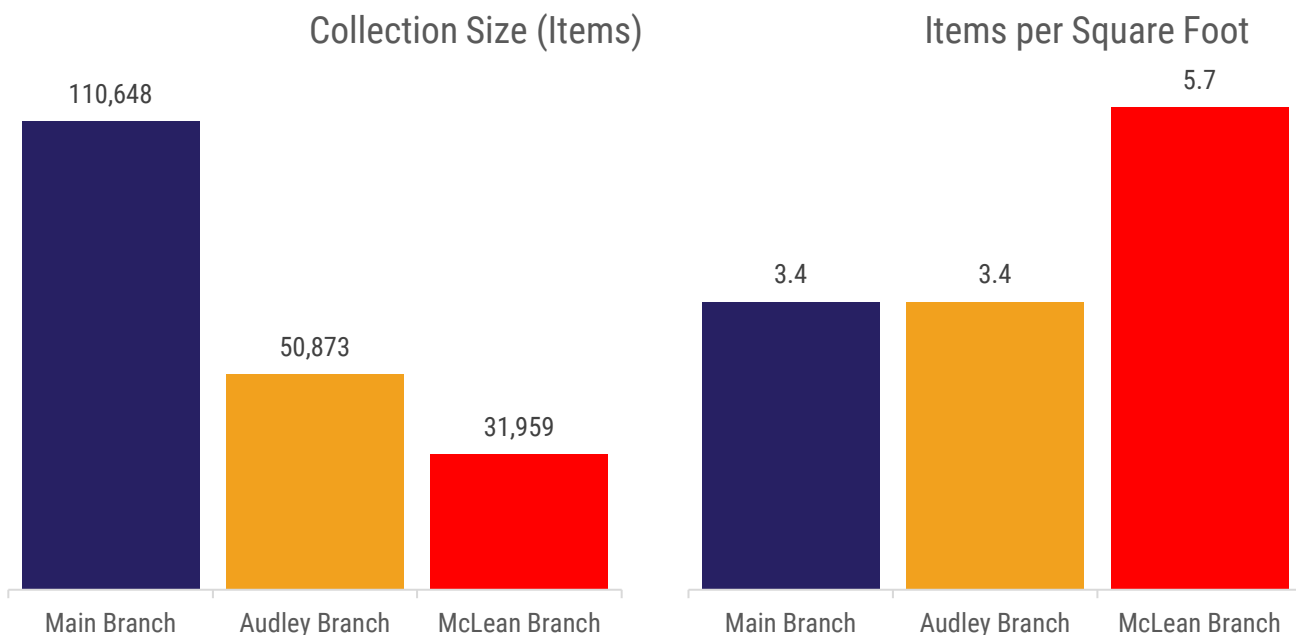
more people working from home and, for some, this may become permanent. These trends mean that new and renovated libraries need technology-equipped spaces that can be reconfigured for different sized groups as well as areas that act as community “living rooms” with comfortable, casual seating.

4.4 Library Collections

Borrowing books and materials remains one of the most popular reasons for visiting public libraries. However, lending services are evolving (e.g., a physical collection that is more focused on popular materials and growing digital resources) and being supplemented by an increasing focus on creation and collaboration in library spaces. This is leading to a reduced collections footprint in new and reconfigured libraries. Reduced collections and stacks favour open building designs with room for more seating, meeting, and study areas.

Ajax Public Library maintained a physical collection of 193,500 items⁵ in 2020. Main Branch, as with most central branches, houses the largest collection while McLean Branch holds the fewest number of items. Based on gross floor area, however, Figure 2 makes it apparent that collections consume 1.5 times as much floor space at McLean Branch (5.7 items per square foot) compared to the other two branches (3.4 items per square foot). Further, it bears noting that the Library’s total collection has been reduced from its pre-pandemic average of approximately 205,000 items.

Figure 2: Physical Collection Size by Branch



Source: Ajax Public Library spreadsheet, 2020

Despite various restrictions, Ajax Public Library has played a critical role in the cultural life of the Town during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across many library systems, access to digital collections increased during the pandemic. Ajax Public Library's virtual branch kept residents connected to the digital collection, virtual programs and other online resources. Trends suggest that strong demand for digital resources will continue over the foreseeable future. Many patrons continued to borrow physical items through the use of online holds and curbside pick-up. With a number households having been affected financially by the pandemic, this could lead them to seek out affordable options (such as borrowing instead of buying, accessing free programs, etc.) and Ajax Public Library is well positioned to address many of these needs.

4.5 Library Design

People expect libraries to be well-designed with inspiring spaces in which they want to spend time. Spaces must be accessible to everyone with convenient and appealing amenities such as washrooms, comfortable seating, power outlets, Wi-Fi and more. Modern libraries are being designed as flexible spaces that can be reconfigured according to changing needs.

Some libraries have an increased focus on people and less on collections space⁶ and may include modular fixtures and ergonomic furniture, wide and uncluttered aisles with lower shelving to accommodate persons with physical disabilities, and a more "open" interior to accommodate study and workspace with good sightlines. Some libraries are also extending outside the facility (e.g., reading gardens or patio spaces), increasing usable library space on a seasonal basis. As a result, the demand for library space is on the rise. An emphasis on good building design is critical. Flexible, accessible and resilient spaces are required. Specific responses may include (but are not limited to):

- fewer desktops and more mobile devices;
- movable, cleanable and durable furniture;
- enhanced air exchange and connections to outdoors;
- less congested and more open public areas;
- reconfigured administration workspaces;
- larger, accessible washrooms with more touchless features;
- more expandable network infrastructure;
- large, multi-purpose rooms to accommodate study, meetings, learning and programs;
- aesthetically-pleasing environments;
- space-making with furniture choices and configurations;
- the use of sustainable materials and energy efficient equipment; and
- more outdoor reading areas, pop-ups in parks and public spaces, and other outreach or program opportunities.

Looking ahead, complete communities that provide easy access to schools, jobs and the services that are needed the most are excelling during the pandemic, emphasising the need to continue to provide library services that are accessible to all residents.

4.6 Libraries and Makerspaces

Modern libraries are not only focused on literacy programs, but also support experiential activities that provide library users with opportunities to embrace their creativity through traditional means and modern technologies. A leading trend in the library sector is the emergence of makerspaces, which are shared, community spaces that foster creativity and innovation, support collaboration and interaction amongst peer and like-minded individuals, and facilitates skill development and life-long learning. They provide access to low- and high-tech tools and equipment for free, teach people how to use tools, and introduce them to new techniques and skills through workshops, training and educational programming.⁷

Ajax Public Library is playing a part in the Town's drive towards innovation and smart technology through the development of makerspaces. While this type of space does not currently exist, Ajax Public Library recently completed a study to determine community interests and explore potential makerspace locations. Through a review of potential locations, the study recommended that a makerspace containing three distinct areas (a Make Zone, Think Zone, and Create Zone) should be developed at the McLean Branch location by repurposing an existing program room in the community centre.

4.7 Libraries Using Technology

With in-person events and programs cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ajax Public Library pivoted to virtual programming. Many of the Library's programs are available online including virtual storytimes, arts and crafts, webinars, STEAM activities and more. However, demand has not all shifted to virtual programming as Ajax Public Library continues to experience demand for in-person programming. The education sector has also shifted to virtual learning and this trend may continue into the future in some capacity. This is likely to lead to greater demand for supports to students, distance learners, and home school networks. There is a likelihood that a demand for both in-person and virtual programming and educational support will continue post-pandemic.

Public libraries help bridge the "digital divide" by offering digital and wireless technologies to low-income residents and expand their access to knowledge and resources.⁸ Provision of these services not only provides users with access to devices that may otherwise be out of reach, but also empowers upward mobility through connectivity. Libraries need to be well-equipped with technologies that facilitate connected learning environments, as well as comfortable seating that is in close proximity to outlets for charging devices.

4.8 Library Cafes

Historically, food and drinks were prohibited from library spaces due to the need to protect and preserve library collections, as well as to minimize staff maintenance and cleaning, as well as pests. Changing societal norms have led libraries to be more receptive of food and drinks to create a more welcoming and casual atmosphere. This trend is consistent with library trends that view these important institutions as community hubs and “third” places where people use libraries to gather, socialize, work, study, and participate in other activities that encourages patrons to stay longer. Relaxing food and drink policies also recognizes that these important elements of sustenance are important to the human body and are some of the desirable comfort amenities.

While there is a fine balance between the need to preserve and protect library materials and respond to the desire for access to food and drinks, some library systems have been finding middle ground through the provision of vending machines to the development of on-site cafes such as at the Central Branch of the Whitby Public Library, which allows users to access food and drinks without leaving the library. This approach has space implications as well as other considerations regarding exterior and internal access, as well as operating considerations.

4.9 Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums

Galleries, libraries, archives and museums collectively form the “GLAM” sector. GLAMs play an important role in protecting, preserving and promoting Canadian history, as well as providing resources for research, education, learning and artistic creation. GLAMs offer similar opportunities to the community and as a result, it is common for them to work together to provide services efficiently and effectively. For example, there are library systems that oversee archives and museums to protect, preserve and promote local records, artifacts and resources. To a certain degree, some libraries also incorporate galleries to display works by notable artisans and crafts persons.

In 2016, the Municipality of Clarington initiated a process to explore a merger between Museum and Archives Board with the Clarington Public Library (among other operating approaches). A report prepared by Clarington staff identified that libraries, museums and archives are natural partners as they offer universal access, support for life-long learning that enhance community development, and act as a gathering place for social interaction and engagement. There were also operational and governance benefits associated with merging the two entities such as efficiencies with respect to program delivery and public education to create an enhanced user experience, collection development and storage, key performance indicators, staffing, policy development and more.⁹ This merger was completed in January 2020; it did not result in an expansion of library space but the responsibilities and management of two buildings were transferred to the Clarington Public Library.

“I would like to see more local art displayed throughout the public spaces.”

~ Resident Comment

The transfer of archive services also took place in the Town of Whitby. Local archives were previously the responsibility of the Whitby Historical Society and the Town of Whitby, which were located in a heritage building. During the planning of the Whitby Central Library, archive responsibilities were transferred to the Whitby Public Library as there was synergies between these two services. The Whitby Public Library provided similar community services such as genealogy and historical resources (e.g., photographs, newspapers, etc.) and thus, there were benefits and efficiencies associated with programming, storing and cataloging material. Archive space was incorporated into the design of the Whitby Central Library, which is located on the second floor and includes two offices, display space, shelving, and a common workspace to view material. Additionally, storage space is available in the basement of the Whitby Central Library.

Ajax Public Library has a local history collection that includes resources about the Town of Ajax and Durham Region, photographs, microfilms and more. The Library also offers online tools and resources including a digital archive of records and genealogy services, as well as Canadiana – a catalogue of resources found in libraries, museums and archives across Canada. In addition to the historical resources offered by the Library, the Town of Ajax operates the Ajax Archives. Stored within the Town Hall, the Ajax Archives preserves important historical records and material related to the growth and development of the Town including photographs, documents and artifacts. Opportunities could be explored with the Town to identify efficiencies with the Library playing a role in operating the archives.

4.10 Libraries as Part of the Pandemic Recovery

After the 2008 financial crisis, the American Library Association (ALA) found that recession drives more Americans to libraries in search of employment resources. The ALA report stated that “**Hard times bring libraries’ value into sharper focus**” and that public libraries were a critical part of helping unemployed workers navigate the online job market, learn new skills (including resume building), deliver continuing education programs, and access government services. The closure of elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions may also drive students to a library branch to use computer and internet services, particularly for those that do not have the means to access the technology at home.

“Please keep online programs after COVID-19. It is very convenient and allows us to attend more programs.”

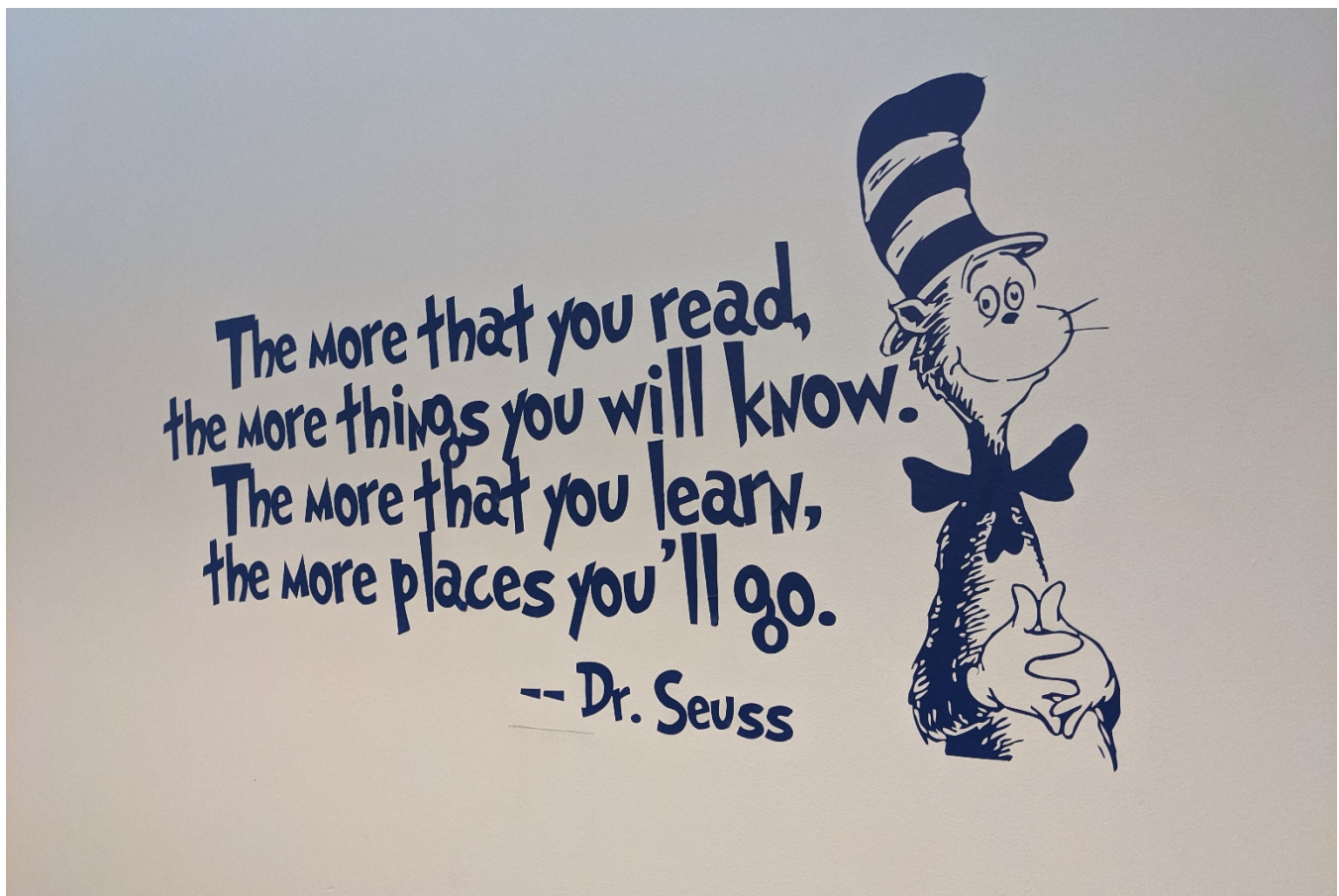
~ Resident Comment

With certain parallels between the 2008 economic downturn and the current COVID-19 crisis, it is reasonable to expect that Canada’s public library system will once again be relied upon as a pillar of resiliency. That being said, the same American Library Association report found that funding lagged following the recession as state and city budgets were cut, resulting in reduced library budgets and hindering their ability to operate at full capacity in the months that followed. In Canada, it remains to be seen if pandemic-related stimulus from senior levels of government will be sufficient to allow libraries and other civic institutions to maintain their current funding allocations, and how funding will

compare to the level of need being placed on the public library system as a result of any economic downturn.

Given that the pandemic has been ongoing for more than a year at the time of writing, the long-term projection is less certain and much will depend on the duration and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the release of vaccines, there is cautious optimism that the end may be on the horizon. Concerns about gatherings may keep some people away from library programs/events and crowded spaces. Some people may take it a step further and spend more time in, or relocate to less populated, suburban or rural areas.

To be successful, library systems must continue to look to research and lessons from across the world and invest time and resources in new technologies and approaches that assist in realizing the many benefits associated with access to library services.



Wall Painting at McLean Branch

5.0 Community Engagement

5.1 Community Awareness

Consultation with residents, stakeholders, Library staff, the Library Board and Town Council was undertaken to understand current issues and future opportunities associated with Ajax Public Library. The following community engagement initiatives informed the Needs Assessment:

- Virtual public information centre
- Community survey
- Stakeholder focus group
- Library staff workshops
- Teen Advisory Council workshop
- Older Adults Advisory Committee workshop
- Mayor & Council interviews

To raise awareness about the Needs Assessment, a webpage was created to provide information specifically about the project and ways for people to become engaged. Information boards highlighting the project process and key background information were also posted along with a dedicated project e-mail address to collect public comments and feedback. The final Needs Assessment and other project updates will be posted to the website as these become available.

Regular meetings with the Project Team and Library Board occurred throughout the planning process to review and provide feedback on project deliverables.

The information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered even in the instances where comments may not reflect the Library's actual policies, practices or service levels.



5.2 Community Survey

A community survey was undertaken between August 10 and September 13, 2021, to collect input on a variety of topics related to libraries to inform the Needs Assessment. The survey explored usage levels of Ajax Public Library branches, priorities, preferences for services, and more. The survey was promoted through the Ajax Public Library and Town of Ajax website, eNewsletter, social media (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook), and word of mouth. The survey was available to complete through online and hard copy formats. A total of 758 surveys were received and analyzed. This section highlights key findings from the survey. The survey results presented in this section may not equal 100% as 'Don't Know/Unsure' or 'Neutral' responses are not shown. Some questions also allowed respondents to select multiple choices.

With the COVID-19 pandemic having closed library branches and reduced the availability of services typically provided in 2020 and 2021, survey respondents were asked to report their participation levels from 2019 (pre-COVID) to provide an accurate representation of what libraries respondents typically visited. As this is a self-administered survey, the results are not statistically significant or representative of Ajax's entire population.

5.2.1 Survey Respondent Profile

- 95% of respondents had at least one member of the household that is an active Ajax Public Library cardholder.
- The median age of survey respondent was 48 years old, 11 years above the 2016 Census median.
- The average household size was 3.3 persons, in line with the 2016 Census.
- Respondents represented all areas of Ajax with 46% residing south of Highway 401 and west of Salem Road, 29% of respondents living north of Highway 401 and west of Salem Road, and 18% of respondents residing east of the Salem Road corridor.
- Residents that have lived in Ajax for more than 10 years accounted for 61% of responses, suggesting that much of the survey sample is well established in the Town.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents identified as female, 26% identified as male and 1% identifying as non-binary.

5.2.2 Visits to Ajax Public Library

In the 12 months leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, one out of three respondents were frequent users of Ajax Public Library, visiting a Library branch one or more times per week. 5% of respondents only used online Library resources and 7% were not Library users (Figure 3). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents visited the Main Branch which was the most visited branch location prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. McLean Branch was the second most visited location (35%) followed by Audley Branch (20%), the latter a result of having only been open for a short time before the pandemic (Figure 4).

Among the respondents who indicated that they do not use Ajax Public Library, the most common reason was that they get their information from non-library sources such as bookstores, subscriptions, online and other resources (22%). The fact that they just moved to the area was also a common response (18%) (Figure 5).

Figure 3: Frequency of visiting an Ajax Public Library branch, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

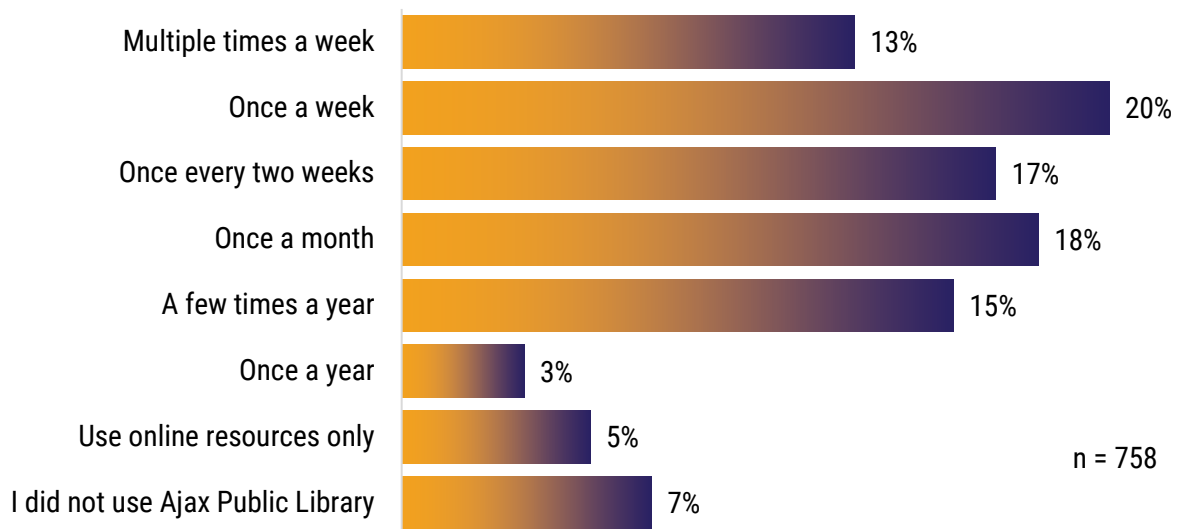


Figure 4: Most visited Library branches visited by households prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

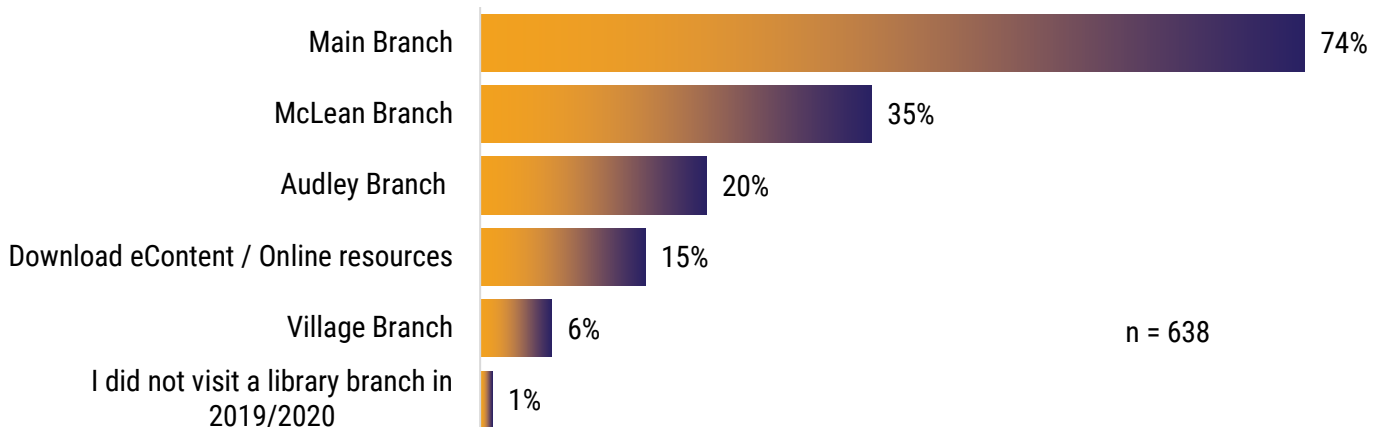
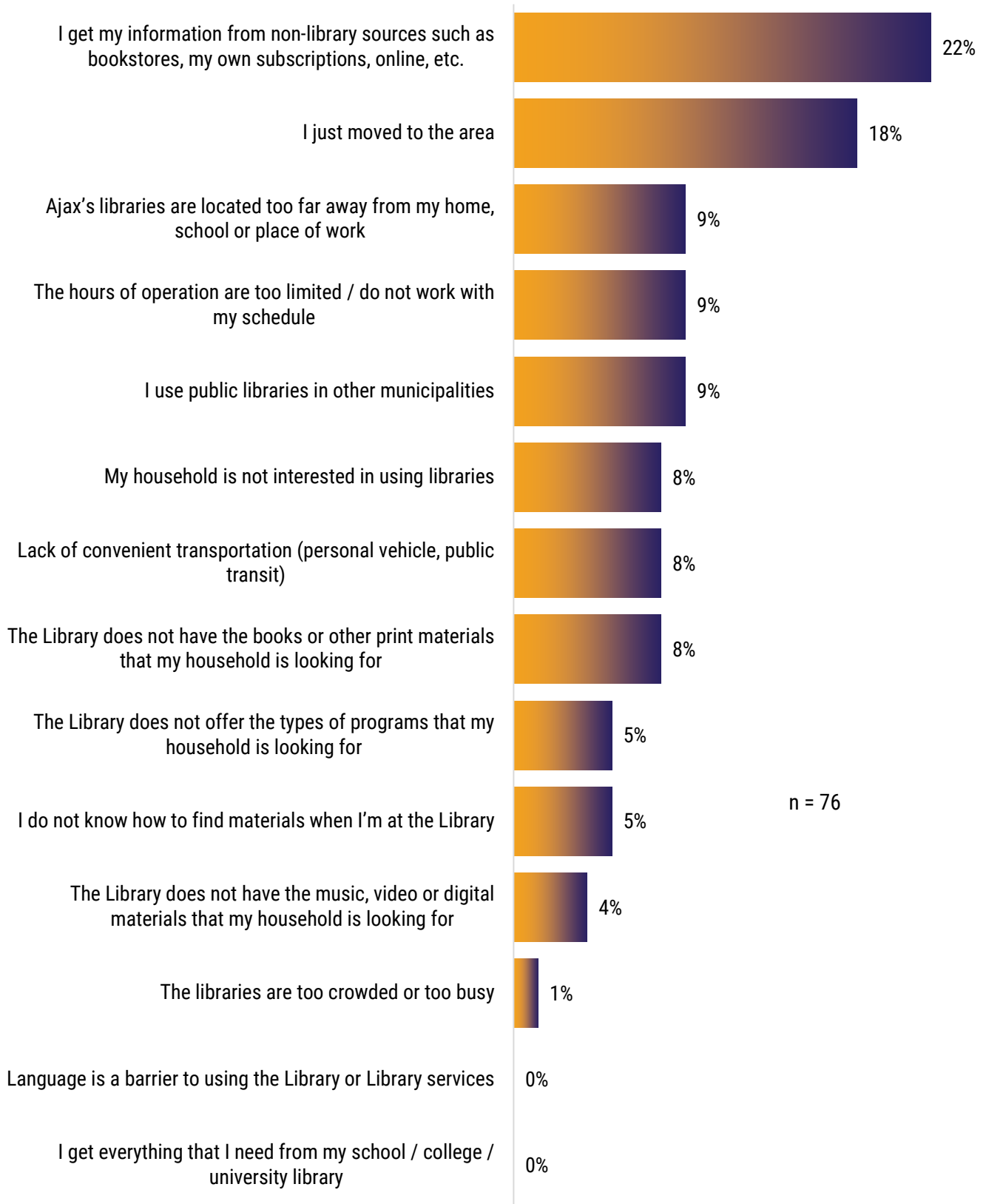
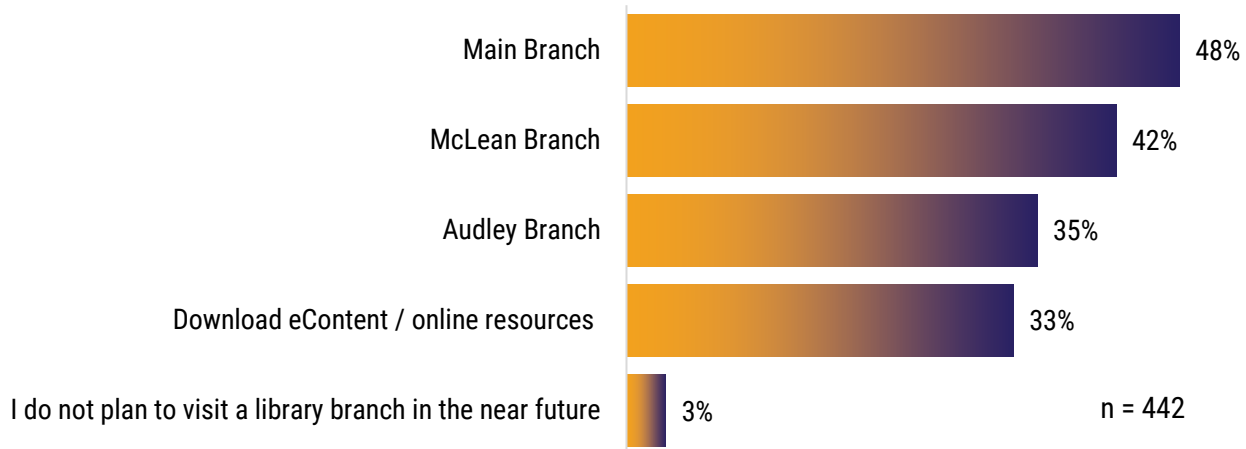


Figure 5: Reasons for Not using Ajax Public Library



48% of respondents indicated that they plan to visit the Main Branch after the COVID-19 pandemic, 42% of respondents would return to McLean Branch and 35% identified the Audley Branch. One out of three respondents also identified that they would use the Ajax Public Library’s online resources, while 3% do not intend to visit the Library in the future (Figure 6).

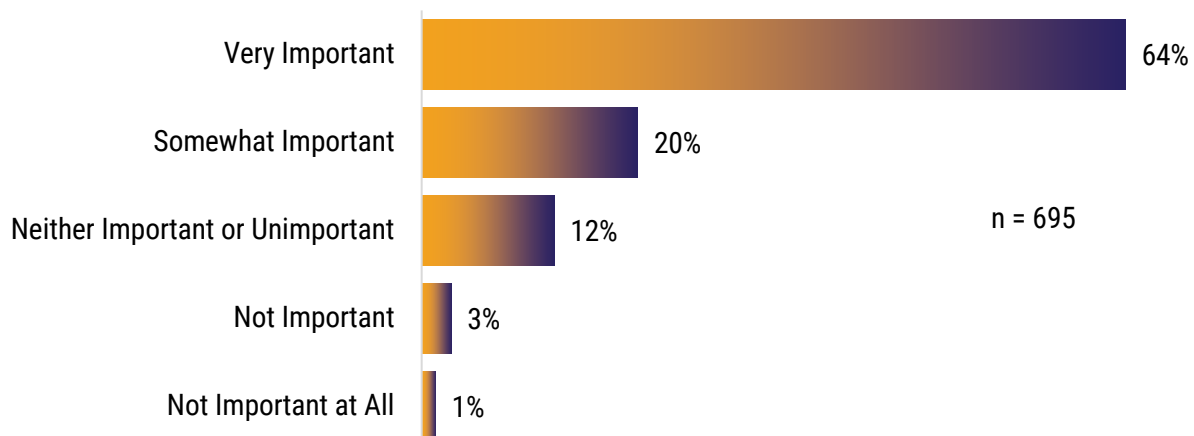
Figure 6: Ajax Public Library branches households plan to visit after the COVID-19 pandemic



5.2.3 Importance & Satisfaction with Ajax Public Library

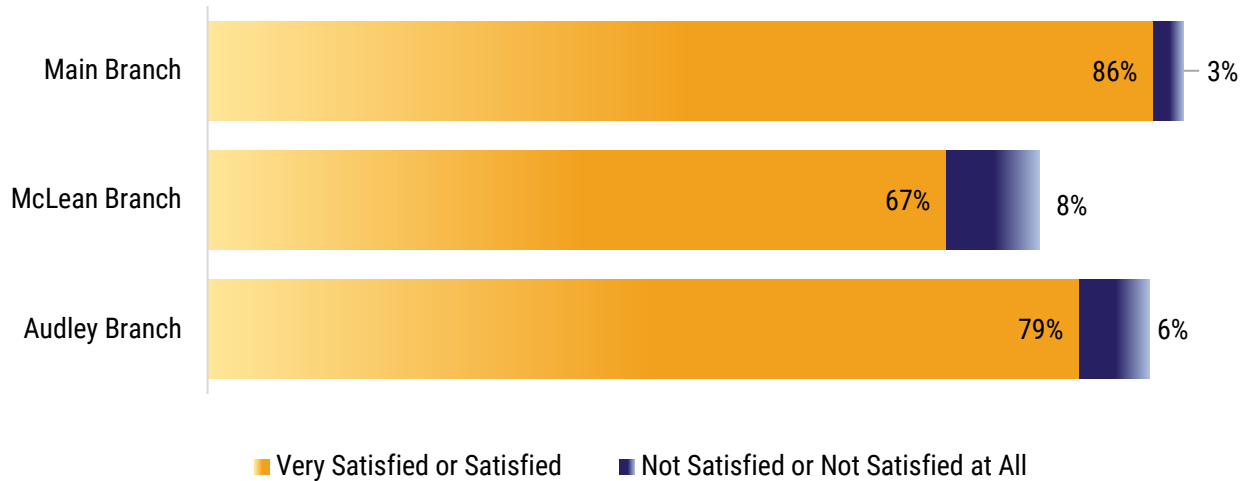
Respondents reinforced the importance of Ajax Public Library with 84% stating that it is very important to somewhat important to their household; just 4% felt that the Library was not important or not important at all (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Importance of Ajax Public Library



Generally speaking, respondents who visited Ajax Public Library branches are satisfied with overall Library experiences provided through space, services and programs. Respondents were most satisfied with the Main Branch (86%), followed by Audley Branch (79%) and McLean Branch (67%).

Figure 8: Satisfaction with Ajax Public Library branches



5.2.4 Library Activities and Services

Browsing and borrowing books (86%) was the most popular activity for which respondents use Ajax Public Library. Other popular uses were browsing and borrowing media such as DVDs and CDs (40%), using the Ajax Public Library website (39%), reading and relaxing (33%), and accessing library programs and events (32%) (Figure 9).

Figure 10 highlights the types of activities and services that would encourage respondents to use Ajax Public Library more often once the COVID-19 restrictions are fully lifted. The most popular response was to expand the digital download library for free downloads and streaming services (32%), expand the print collection (27%), offer more programs and events at the Library (26%), provide more outdoor reading areas and gardens (24%), and offer more seating and lounge areas (23%).

“Expand the diversity of collections and programs to cater to the needs of a growing older adult and diverse population.”

“There needs to be more language programs and materials available in different languages.”

~ Public Comments

Figure 9: Activities and services typically used at Ajax Public Library branches (n=677)

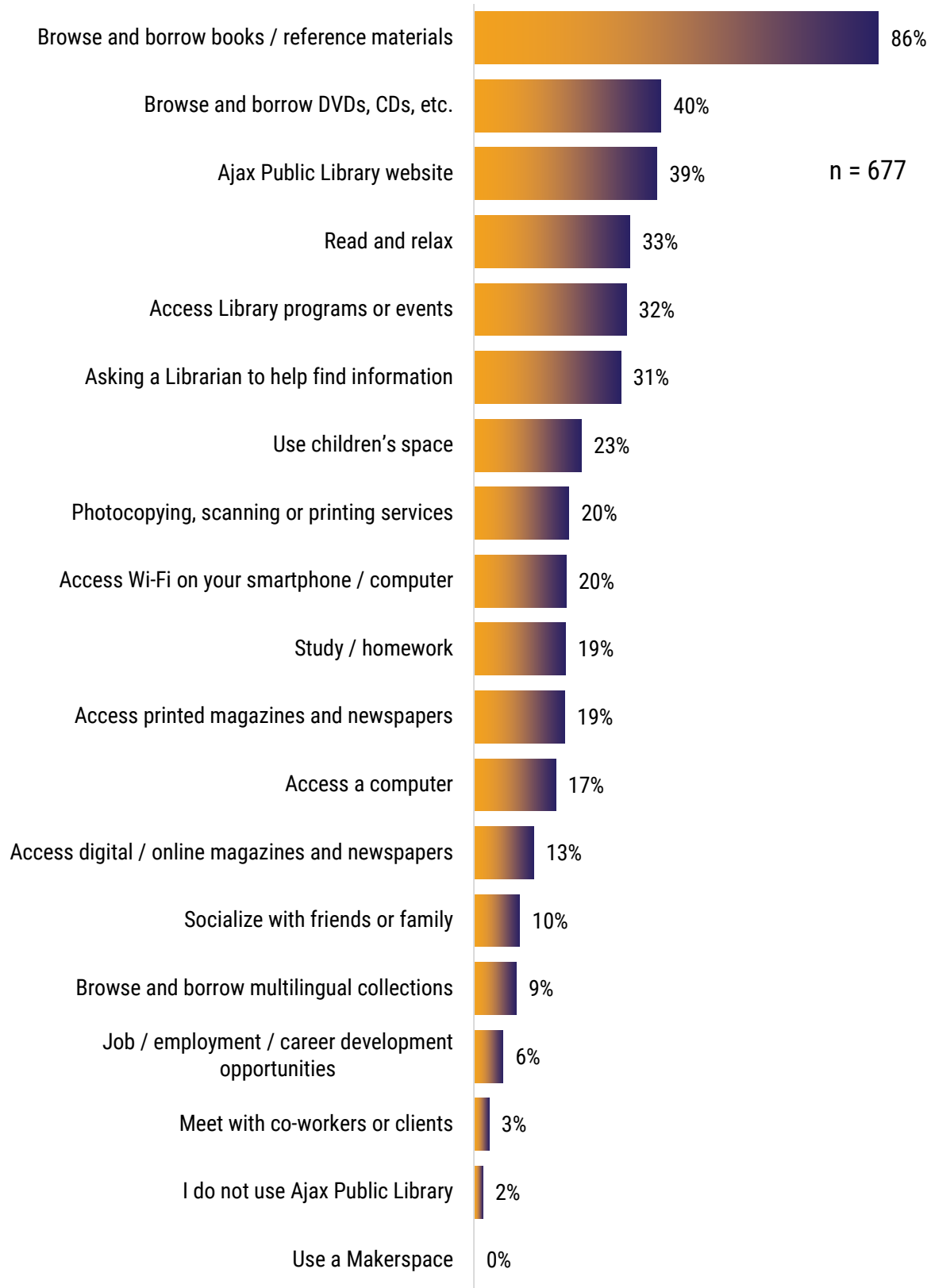


Figure 10: Strategies to Encourage More Use of Library branches after the COVID-19 pandemic

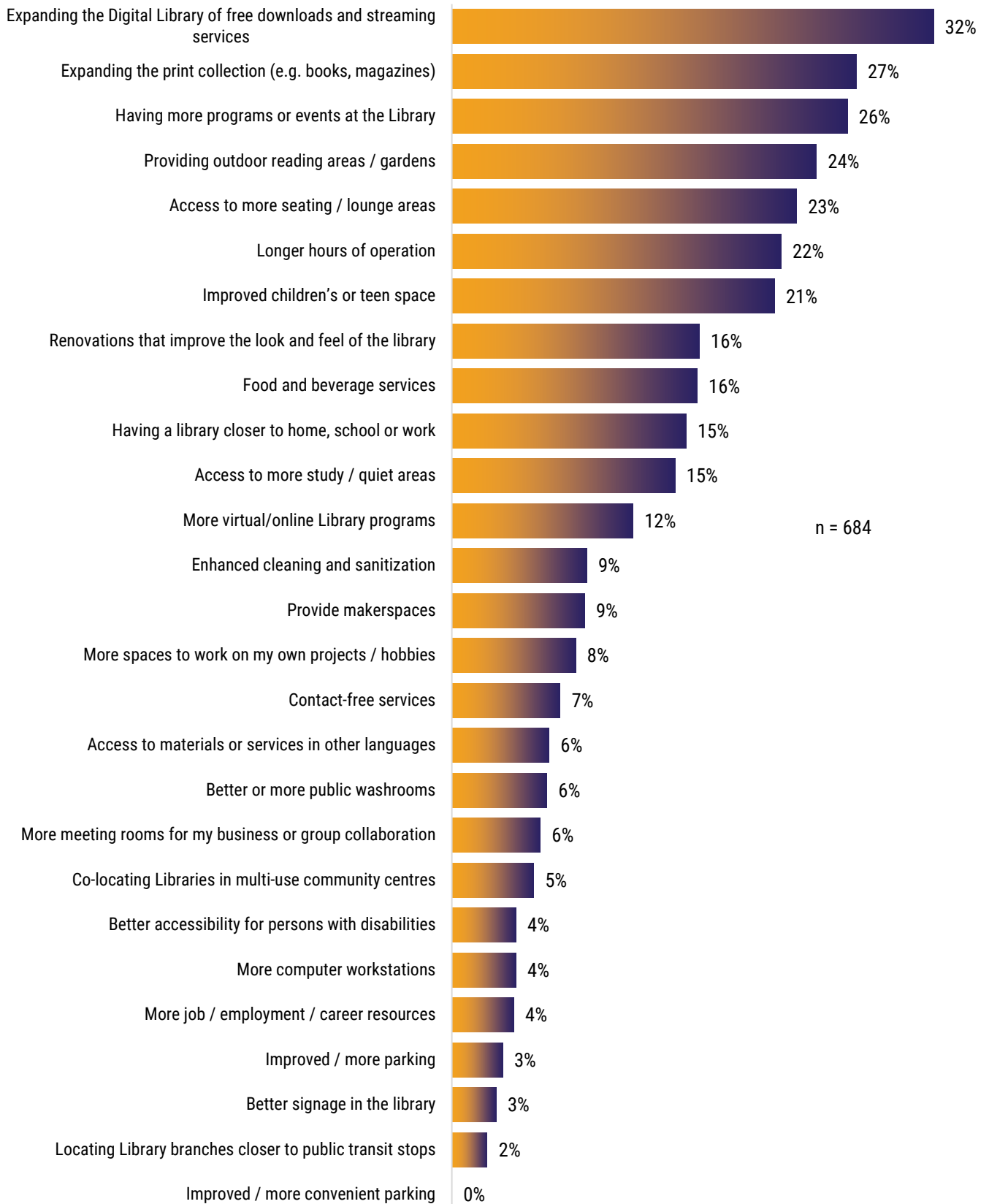
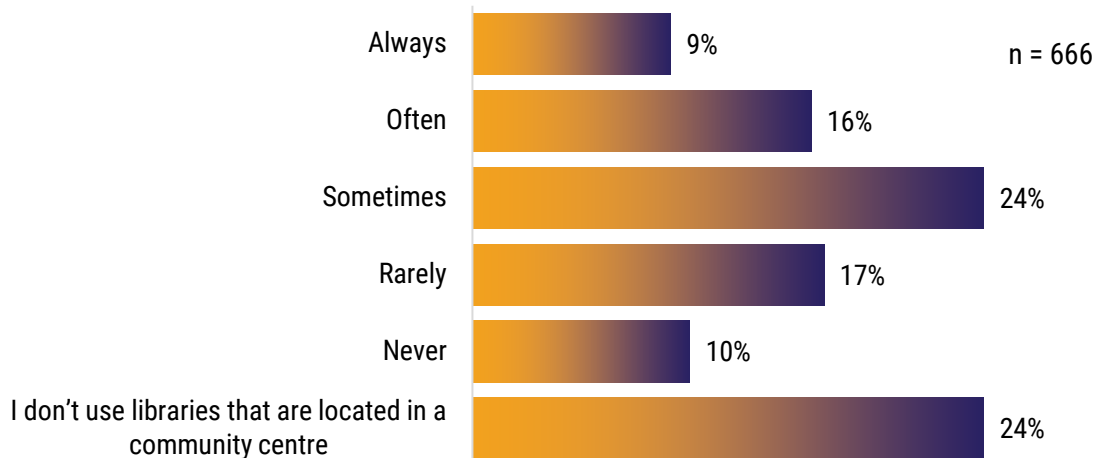


Figure 11 illustrates respondents' usage of community centre spaces or programs when visiting a Library branch that is located within a community centre such as the Audley Branch and McLean Branch. One out of four respondents identified that they always or often use other facilities, which suggests that co-locating libraries within other municipal services and amenities is appealing to them. 27% of respondents rarely or never use other community centre components and 24% do not use libraries located in community centres.

Figure 11: Usage of Other Community Centre Components Co-Located with Library Branches



5.2.5 Additional Comments

Respondents had an opportunity to provide additional input to be considered in the development of the Needs Assessment. In general, comments focused on strategies to improve the Library experience such as offering more materials in different languages and expanding digital resources (e.g., eBooks). With respect to space improvements, suggestions included space for video conference meetings, reading gardens, café, studying, program rooms and public art. The desire for a broader range of programs was identified that centred upon literacy, activities for older adults and seniors and virtual programs. Suggestions for events included concerts and poetry readings. Extending Library operating hours and opening branches during statutory holidays were also identified as being desirable for some.

5.3 Stakeholder Focus Group

A stakeholder focus group with community organizations was carried out on September 14, 2021, bringing local agencies and community advocates together to discuss the future of Ajax Public Library. The session was attended by individuals representing:

1. Literacy Network of Durham Region
2. EarlyON Child and Family Centre Ajax
3. Grandview Kids
4. French Improvement Centre Oshawa
5. Region of Durham Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division

A summary of themes from the focus group is consolidated below.

Organizations are Looking for Space

The COVID-19 has required some community organizations to downsize their scope of programs and services, though groups continue to rely on access to Library space. There is a desire for large flexible space that can be manipulated to offer simultaneous programs, as well as areas reserved for stroller parking.

Accessible to Everyone

Libraries need to be fully accessible in order to be inclusive of all users. Some groups explained that the Library can be too loud or that people with special needs may be sensitive to noise, which may discourage people from using the Library. Incorporating a separate sensory sensitive rooms/areas could result in a space where users feel comfortable and create an opportunity for the Library to be more inclusive and accessible. As well, expanding the collections to include material for persons with developmental challenges was also suggested.

Promote our Diversity

Ajax Public Library should reflect and represent the Town's diverse community. New Canadians living in Ajax will often access the Library as their first point of contact for resources and support. To respond to this, stakeholders identified that Ajax Public Library should offer a larger multilingual collection and signage in different languages so everyone can feel welcome. Public art that reflects Ajax's cultural diversity could also help create a more welcoming and inclusive space. Staffing that reflects the population diversity was also mentioned as important.

In addition to the focus group, a stakeholder survey was made available with two submissions received; the following is a summary of key themes:

- Stakeholders appreciated the support of Ajax Public Library with respect to collaboration and partnerships, as well as the flexibility of staff to respond to user needs.
- Suggestions to improve the Ajax Public Library system included more or expanding program space to support STEAM programs. Improved communication between Ajax Public Library, Library stakeholders and users was also suggested, particularly with respect to how information is disseminated to minimize confusion. Other suggestions included more work space for collaboration and additional technology such as computers and makerspaces, along with technical support to assist users.

5.4 Library Staff and Management Workshop

Two separate workshops were held with Ajax Public Library frontline and management staff on August 23rd and 24th, 2021, respectively. The purpose of these sessions was to gather vital knowledge and perspectives of staff on a range of library-related topics, as well as to establish buy-in and support for the Needs Assessment. Notable and common themes from the workshops have been consolidated so that responses are not personally identifiable to any particular staff person.

Technology

Ajax Public Library may need to implement more technological advancements to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and health and safety concerns. Recognizing that some Library users may not be comfortable with using technology, implementing a Tech Help Desk with a dedicated staff member to provide assistance could be beneficial to Library users. Staff also identified a need exists for more electrical outlets or standing charging stations because many users bring personal electronics such as phones or laptops.

Separation Space

Staff observe the need for separation of spaces within the Library. One of the most common comments staff have heard from the public is that sound travels through a Library branch, making it hard for users to find a quiet space to work. While it is recognized that children's and teen areas should be provided to support their interaction, they should be located in areas that would not disrupt quiet study spaces.

Partnering with Government Organizations

It would be beneficial for Ajax Public Library to connect Ajax newcomers to resources that are typically provided beyond the Library. Partnerships with government organizations such as Service Ontario, Service Canada, the Welcome Centre or New Immigration Services could attract and welcome immigrants to the Library. With language barriers it can be difficult to complete government forms or understand what is being asked of them. By offering print outs of forms, Library staff can assist people with filling out government forms.

Study Space

There is higher demand than ever for study and workspace because of people working remotely. They are seeking study rooms that function as office space and thus, reliable Wi-Fi connections and printing services are essential. Student's also desire quiet study cubicles as well as group study rooms where they can gather for projects and feel comfortable talking without disturbing others.

Limit Restrictions

Staff expressed that people should not have to have a Library card in order to access Library resources as it may pose a barrier for people that struggle to obtain valid ID. Many people are requesting guest passes for single day use because they cannot easily get a Library card.

Alternative Library Spaces

As the Town grows, Ajax Public Library will need to be innovative in ensuring that library services are available to all residents. With a growing emphasis on directing population growth towards designated growth areas, there may be opportunities to establish satellite Libraries as well as pop-up or pick-up points that could be integrated within new or existing developments. Other considerations would be to provide Library kiosks or pick-up locations near transit stations or a book mobile that travels to people that may not be able to access the Libraries.

In addition to the staff workshops, a staff survey was made available with 13 submissions received; the following is a summary of key themes:

- The community values several aspects of Ajax Public Library such as the variety of programs, services and other resources that are provided. Ajax Public Library is also viewed as a welcoming place in the community for people to gather.
- Suggestions to improve how Ajax Public Library responds to the needs of the neighbourhoods they are located in included offering more private workspaces, creating cafés, responding to technology needs and trends (e.g., makerspace), enhancing digital resources, and more.
- To better connect with residents and neighbourhoods, suggestions were made to strategically locate libraries within community centres, parks, and shopping areas. Establishing book mobiles, pop-ups, or other decentralized strategies to increase Library access could also be considered, particularly in areas of intensification.
- Suggested improvements to the Main Branch included improved teen areas, display areas for public art and historical artifacts, general updates, and improved wayfinding and signage, as well as new spaces such as study areas, quiet spaces and makerspaces.
- Suggested enhancements to Audley Branch included improving supervision sightlines throughout the branch, a new service desk near the children's area, shade in the outdoor garden, improved signage, ensuring that furniture is accessible, and creating more study space and a makerspace.
- Staff identified opportunities to improve the McLean Branch including a cosmetic facelift to update the location, improved signage and expanding the branch to accommodate additional program opportunities, computers and storage. Wi-Fi reliability was also identified as an issue.
- Generally speaking, most staff felt that the southern portion of Ajax (near the lake) is underserved in terms of physical access and/or with Library programs and services.
- There was a desire to expand material in a variety of languages to recognize Ajax's diverse community. Other services staff felt should be expanded included programming for adults, STEAM programs, training and social services, and historical artifacts. It was also mentioned that some of these opportunities may be achieved through partnerships with other organizations.

5.5 Teen Advisory Council Workshop

The Town of Ajax Teen Advisory Council was engaged in the planning process on August 23, 2021, to discuss Library services in Ajax from a teen’s perspective. Notable comments from the meeting are summarized below.

Quality Study Space

One of the most common reasons that teens visit the Library was to access quiet study and workspace, thus making designated spaces highly desirable amenities. To enhance the group study rooms, teens identified that access to technology such as televisions would be helpful to allow users to project information with others. All study spaces should also be equipped with power outlets and Wi-Fi.

Post-Secondary Resources

As many teens are preparing and planning for their post-secondary education, it would be beneficial to offer support for college and university such as writing guides and other related resources. Many teens expressed it can be challenging filling out applications for post-secondary institutions or to seek financial assistance. By offering assistance programs to help with this process, more teens may be attracted to using the Library.

Getting to the Library and its Services

Transportation to libraries is often a barrier for teens as many do not have access to a vehicle. Ensuring that adequate cycling or public transit infrastructure is in place is necessary to minimize travel-related barriers. An alternative solution would be to implement a mobile Library or pop-up such as a book bike or being able to order books online for pick up at Library kiosks.

5.6 Older Adults Advisory Committee Workshop

The Older Adult Advisory Committee had eight members attend the virtual workshop held on August 31, 2021. This workshop was held to gather information specific to the needs of older community members and how they envision the future of the Library. Common themes discussed are summarised below.

Social Centres

Although many seniors still use the Library to read and borrow books another common use is as a social centre. Many seniors live alone and value a space they can gather, socialize and connect. Seniors are looking for comfortable spaces to gather to play games and attend programs. They also expressed a desire to have multigenerational programs where perhaps seniors could read to the youth.

Outdoor Space

Members expressed their desire to incorporate more outdoor Library and meeting spaces. Especially with COVID-19, seniors are more cautious using indoor facilities so an outdoor space would ensure everyone feels safe visiting the Library. Ideas for these spaces were incorporating small outdoor reading areas to existing Libraries or utilize greenspace throughout Ajax to facilitate larger group events.

Servicing the Community

The three Library locations were believed to adequately service Ajax especially with the convenience of interlibrary loans. This provides older adults with access to wider selection of books. To further the accessibility of the Library, offering a book bike was suggested to improve convenience and access to older adults that may not be as mobile to access Library resources.

5.7 Council Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the Town of Ajax Mayor and members of Council. Due to the nature of the discussions, a summary of input was not prepared; however, the key themes that emerged from these interviews will be considered in the preparation of the Needs Assessment.



Main Branch Book Stacks



6.0

Library Space Assessments

6.1 Library Branch Provision Model

Ajax Public Library operates using a centralized facility provision model anchored by the Main Branch with the McLean Branch and Audley Branch serving a localized need for the communities that surround them.

Each library branch is vastly different in terms of size, collections and services offered, and administrative functions; as such, they draw from different geographic catchments depending upon what services are being sought by the public. This results in three branch classifications for Ajax Public Library's facility provision model, summarized below and in greater detail through Figure 12.

1. **Main Branch** (sometimes referred to as Central Libraries in other models);
2. **District Branch** which applies to the Audley Branch based on the recommended size and integration with a community centre located along major transportation corridors; and
3. **Neighbourhood Branch** which applies to the McLean Branch given it is undersized despite being located in a high traffic community centre that is embedded within an established neighbourhood.

The Ajax Public Library Master Plan suggested that all libraries be located within 1.5 to 2.0 kilometres of all urban residential areas.¹⁰ Consultations carried out for this Needs Assessment have re-emphasized the challenges faced by some populations in accessing libraries by foot or by transit and thus the historical catchment areas have been retained.

Figure 12: Ajax Public Library Branch Model

Main Branch

Main Branch is the largest branch in the library system, designed to attract residents from across the Town of Ajax. Main Branch serves a number of vital functions including acting as a resource centre with expanded reference collections, the centre of the inter-library delivery system and houses the Library's administrative staff. Co-located as part of the Town Hall and Arbour Park campus, Main Branch is a central hub for community activity and is a key asset along the Harwood Road corridor where urban intensification and regeneration activities are being planned.

Catchment Area: Town-wide
Optimal Size: 45,000 square feet (minimum)

District Branch

A District Branch is intended to provide a broad range of collections, services and programs; it is sometimes curated to the characteristics and preferences of people living in the communities that surround them. A District Branch is ideally co-located with complementary civic services such as community centres, arts and cultural facilities, recreational amenities, and other community-focused services.

Catchment Area: 2.0 kilometres
Optimal Size: 15,000 square feet (minimum)

Neighbourhood Branch

A Neighbourhood Branch is intended to be a service point that fill gaps between the District Branches. They may provide a more limited range of services and programs due to their smaller size and may rely on the inter-library delivery system to a greater extent in order to service their customers. They may be integrated within community centres, storefront or retail plazas or other spaces embedded within neighbourhoods.

Catchment Area: 1.5 kilometres
Optimal Size: 10,000 square feet (minimum)

Supplementary Space Considerations

In planning individual spaces, ARUPLO Facility Guidelines should also be considered including the following that would be applicable under the branch classification model as follows. There may be unique local circumstances that affect these guidelines and there are other design considerations beyond those identified through ARUPLO including (but not limited to) program rooms, storage, administrative space, etc. As such, the information presented in Table 1 should be only used as a general guide with architectural study and/or community consultations determining the appropriate space allocations for any given library branch.

Table 1: ARUPLO Facility Guidelines by Branch Type

ARUPLO Guideline	Main Branch	District or Neighbourhood Branch
Items in Physical Collection	50,000+	24,000 to 50,000
Children's Area	20% to 40% of total branch area	
Teen Area	5% of total branch area	
User Seating (including computer seating)	200+ @ 35 ft ² per seat	60 to 200 @ 35 ft ² per seat
Number of Public Access Computers	25+	6 to 25
Staff Work Room(s)	15% of total branch area	

Source: ARUPLO Guidelines, 3rd Edition

6.2 Library Space Requirements

Community consultations reiterated the importance that libraries play in the daily lives of Ajax residents. The library branches are civic integrators, places of learning, economic and creative incubators, and hubs of activity. Ajax Public Library is a place where newcomers and established residents can access the information they require, school-age and post-secondary students can study, entrepreneurs can meet with their staff and clients, and where creative individuals can thrive.

Expanded library uses, combined with the evolving role of public libraries as community hubs and gathering spaces, are creating a need for more space as opposed to less. Consultations make it evident that support exists for continued investment in Ajax Public Library branches and services. With demand expressed for individual and group study areas, comfortable seating options, places to connect to Wi-Fi, flexible activity space and barrier-free spaces (including wider aisles, shorter book stacks and accessible washrooms), library space provision targets for Ajax Public Library must take this evolution into account.

Ajax's demographic characteristics significantly influence the requirements for library space and services. The library is a space for everyone with public input and Ajax Public Library user data showing that:

- the Town's young age structure results in young families accessing learning space along with early literacy materials and programs, while teenagers and young adults are looking for quiet study space, places to create, and technology resources;
- a growing population of older adults and seniors is seeking popular materials, continuing education and community events;
- with over 11,000 people living below Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure After-Tax, there are persons experiencing low incomes that rely on library services for school and keeping them competitive in the labour force through access to technology, licensed software applications (e.g. MS Office, Adobe Creative Suites), printing and photocopying services, and volunteer/employment databases;
- vulnerable persons such as those experiencing homelessness or mental health conditions are increasingly seeking out libraries for social services, respite from extreme heat or cold, washroom facilities, safety and more.
- Ajax is a destination point for many newcomers to Canada who utilize library resources for multicultural learning and spaces for social gathering.

The Town of Ajax is forecasted to grow by approximately 5,000 people (4%) by the year 2031; while this is not a substantial rate of growth compared to certain other GTA library systems, the type of growth is envisioned to be much different than the past where there will be fewer subdivision developments characterized by single-detached homes in favour of an increasing number of higher density developments in existing built-up areas. This will compound pressures on the existing branches to provide services to more people and possibly result in the need for additional branches, especially if Ajax Public Library is to provide space at the rate identified in Section 3.4.5 d) of the Town of Ajax Official Plan or attain similar service levels relative to its peer library systems, including those in south Durham.

Per Capita Standards

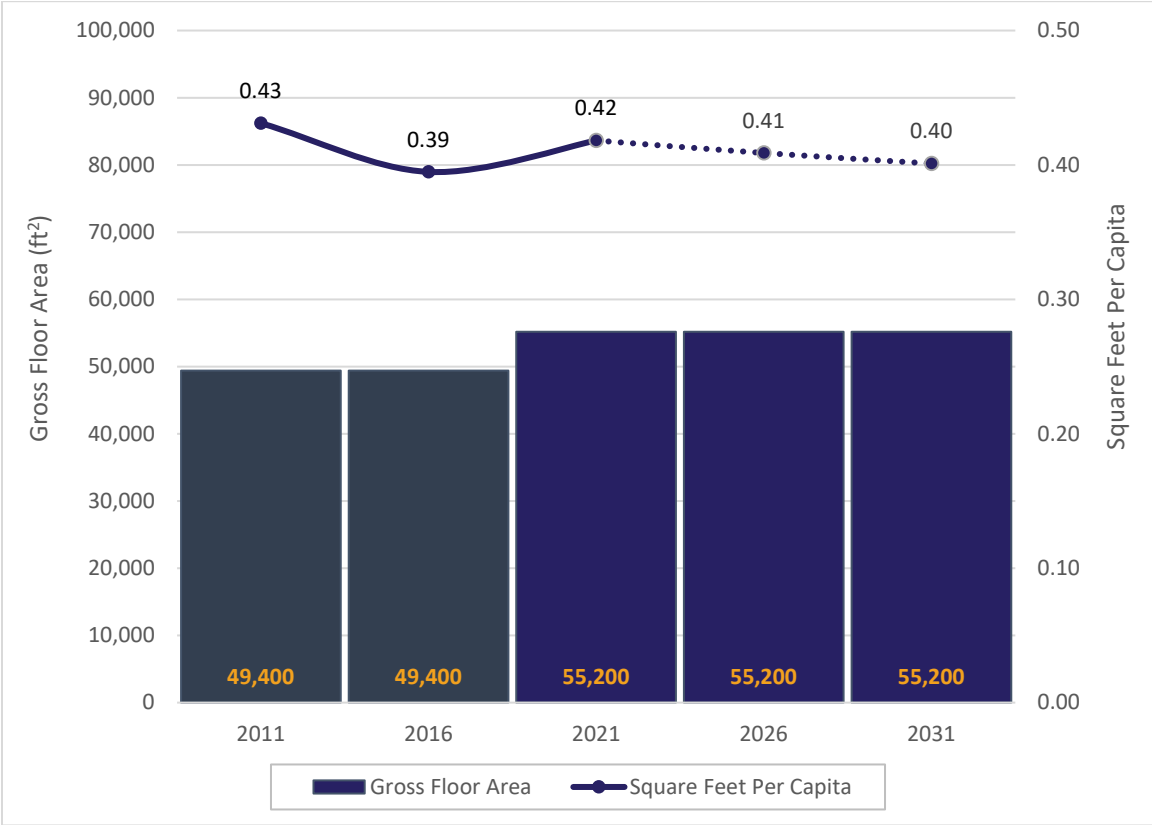
Library facility needs are best assessed through a combination of space requirements and geographic distribution, with consideration being given to potential joint use locations with other civic facilities. Use of per capita standards continues to be a reasonable methodology for projecting high-level needs. Despite the recent evolution of library holdings and roles, library usage levels remain strong and a standards-based approach endures.

The amount of space required by a public library depends on the unique needs of the individual community. The assessment of local needs may be assisted by documents such as the Ontario Public Library Guidelines (Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, 7th edition 2017) and Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems (Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario – ARUPLO, 3rd edition 2017), which provide several measures to assist libraries in future planning in areas such as staffing, space, collection size, collection use and hours.

Although a metric of 0.6 square feet per capita has traditionally been used for system-wide library space assessments and is referenced in the Ajax Official Plan, a higher measure has been promoted within the sector. Unfortunately, these traditional benchmarks do not convey quality, convenience, or user satisfaction. Regular public engagement is vital to identifying local measures of success.

The per capita library space provision is a snapshot in time. Library construction projects occur infrequently and in Ajax, one new branch (Audley) has been constructed in the past 15 years. Figure 13 illustrates that gross floor area has grown slightly but at a rate lower than overall population growth in Ajax. The current gap between population and library space can be expected to widen in the future unless accompanied by an appropriate development strategy.

Figure 13: Ajax Public Library GFA & Square Feet Per Capita, 2011-2031



Note: chart assumes no changes to the current supply of library space



Main Branch New Books Display Area

Comparisons to Other Library Systems

A high level comparison of library statistics was undertaken to compare the Ajax Public Library system with similarly-sized municipalities in South Durham Region (including Clarington, Oshawa, Pickering and Whitby) as well as among Ontario public library systems serving populations between 100,000 and 250,000.

Table 2 illustrates that among South Durham municipalities:

- Only Whitby Public Library branches **serve more people on average** than an Ajax Public Library branch;
- Although Ajax Public Library provides the third highest gross floor area, **it offers the lowest amount of library space per capita** (the latter also applies to all of Durham Region); and
- Ajax Public Library branches contain **an above average number of items per square foot** which is indicative of space-related pressures of housing physical collections required to serve its population base which is heightened by the provision of the lowest square footage per capita.

In relation to mid-size library systems across Ontario between 100,000 to 250,000 population, the results of the benchmarking found that Ajax Public Library:

- offers **half the number of library branches** than the 6 library branches on average found within mid-size municipal borders;
- provides **30% less library space** than the average of 80,000 square feet as measured by gross floor area;
- **ranks second to last in terms of total library space** among all mid-size systems (only Thunder Bay Public Library is lower);
- has a **service level that is 20% below the average** of 0.52 square feet per capita; and
- **ranks second to last in terms of library space per capita** (only Barrie Public Library is lower).¹¹

Both the south Durham and mid-size city per capita space provision levels are in the range of 0.51 to 0.52 square feet per capita. Based on the points above, Ajax Public Library is clearly lagging behind many of its peers in terms of the provision of library space.

Compared to mid-size libraries in Ontario serving populations of 100,000 to 250,000, **Ajax Public Library ranks last in terms of total GFA and second to last in terms of library space per capita.** Ajax Public Library also provides the least amount of library space per capita in Durham Region.

Source: Ontario Public Libraries 2020 Statistics

Table 2: Service Level Comparison of South Durham Library Systems

	Population	Library Branches		Gross Floor Area				Collections		
		No. of Branches	No. of Branches per pop.	Total GFA (sq. ft.)	Sq. Ft. Per Capita	Total GFA (sq. m.)	Sq. M. Per Capita	Physical Collection (Items)	Items per sq. ft.	Items per sq. m.
Clarington Public Library	102,900	4	1 : 25,500	48,704	0.47	4,525	0.044	126,500	2.6	28
Oshawa Public Libraries	175,195	4	1 : 44,000	95,085	0.54	8,834	0.050	339,500	3.6	38
Pickering Public Library	99,040	3	1 : 33,000	46,140	0.47	4,287	0.043	168,000	3.6	39
Whitby Public Library	138,765	3	1 : 46,000	68,000	0.49	6,317	0.046	256,500	3.8	41
Average	128,975	3.5	1 : 37,000	64,482	0.49	5,991	0.046	222,625	3.4	37
Ajax Public Library	132,000	3	1 : 44,000	55,200	0.42	5,128	0.038	200,500	3.6	39

Notes: Selected figures have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 500. Ajax Public Library's total GFA includes its 1,600sf Business Office.

Source: Ontario Public Library Statistics, 2020; Region of Durham Information Report #2020-INFO-98 (Population Estimates)



Geographic Distribution

Ajax Public Library should distribute its library branches in a way that addresses the diverse range of community needs in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Effective space allocation and distribution is essential to the Needs Assessment as there is an expectation that branch libraries be geographically accessible to all Ajax residents, to the greatest degree possible. This means that residents relying on foot, bicycle, car or transit must be able to reach a library within a reasonable time and distance.

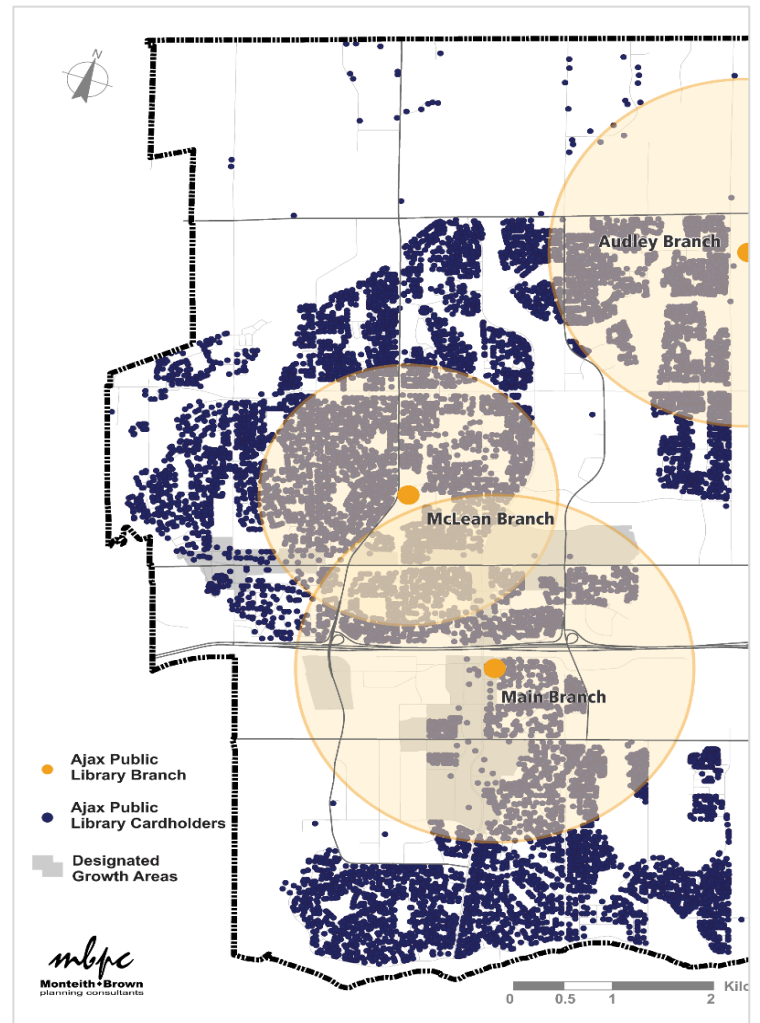
The distribution of Ajax Public Library's three branches results in a concentration of services in the central portion of the town (in a collective of neighbourhoods known as the Downtown, Midtown and Uptown) as well as the north-east. There are no library branches located south of Bayly Street or west of Westney Road.

Catchment areas defined in Section 6.1 for Main, District and Neighbourhood Branch typologies are applied through Figure 14 which also illustrates each branch's geographic catchment in relation to where library cardholder live in Ajax. Noticeable gaps include residential areas in the Ajax waterfront communities (south of Westney Road/Dreyer Drive), within and near the Pickering Village, and north of the intersection at Westney Road at Rossland Road.

Main Branch and Audley Branch are located along major transportation corridors while McLean Branch is accessed by a collector road located just off the Westney Road corridor. This results in strong access by private vehicle for all three branches, however, only the Main Branch is situated along a major public transit corridor at present time.

McLean Branch requires a 300 metre walk (5 minutes for the average person) to the nearest public transit stop while the Audley Branch is situated 700 to 1,500 metres (10 to 20 minutes) from its nearest bus stops depending on access from either Taunton or Rossland Road. These distances would present challenges for certain transit users, particularly those with limited mobility or those accompanied by young children. As examples, residents accessing the Main Branch from the Ajax waterfront could expect a 30 minute journey by bus while people living in the Pickering Village could expect a similar length of time to access the McLean Branch. Access to public transit stops in the vicinity of existing library branches was expressed throughout the consultations undertaken for this Space Assessment.

Figure 14: Branch Catchment Areas in relation to Library Cardholders



Future Space Needs

Ajax Public Library is in a position where it needs to evaluate a number of factors and philosophical directions to determine where it wishes to be in terms of space provision. As discussed, the evolving urban structure of the town is such that the two centrally-located branches can expect to incur greater pressures for collections, programs and services due to ongoing infill projects as well as the diverse socio-economic circumstances of people living and working in the Ajax downtown, midtown and uptown neighbourhoods.

Corporately, Ajax Public Library and the Town of Ajax will need to define their collective visions for how the library branch contributes to broader city-building initiatives relating to placemaking, community vibrancy, urban regeneration, economic development and support for creative industries. A decision will also need to be made as to whether the amount of space provided by Ajax Public Library should be brought in line with peer library systems in Durham Region and Ontario as a whole.

There is strong rationale to continue investing in library space. The Audley Branch represented the first major capital project in 17 years since the Main Branch was built in 2002 despite the population growing by nearly 50,000 people over that time period. The Ajax Public Library Master Plan endorsed a space provision target of 0.55 square feet per capita, a rate that is less than the 0.6 square feet per capita articulated through the Town of Ajax Official Plan, ARUPLO and Ontario Public Library Guidelines, as well as being lower than targets in place for a number of other library systems.

While certain library systems have rationalized a lower space provision target by integrating branches with other civic spaces where program rooms, washrooms, and common areas are shared (e.g. community centres), this is less of the case with Ajax Public Library. Despite two branches being co-located with community centres, the Library's agreement with the Town results in it having to rent community program rooms and competes with other municipal and community bookings; as such, the ancillary spaces are considered separate and do not result in the same degree of space-sharing efficiencies that would rationalize a lower service level target.

The Town of Ajax has been pursuing a new vision for its urban structure through recent development project approvals and land use planning studies such as the Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation Strategy. For this type of vision to be successful, it is imperative that the places being planned result in vibrant communities by attracting a mix of housing, providing a diverse range of business and employment opportunities including creative industries, and quality urban design and civic placemaking investments. Across Canada, libraries have proven to be a crucial institutional anchor to realize "great places" and contribute to urban regeneration and reinvestment.

A decision will need to be made **whether the amount of space provided by Ajax Public Library should be brought in line with peer library systems in Durham Region and Ontario as a whole.**

Accordingly, it is recommended that Ajax Public Library continue to plan its future library space based upon the Town of Ajax Official Plan and ARUPLO standard of 0.6 square feet per capita. Table 3 illustrates the current and projected shortfalls should the current supply of library space remain unchanged.

Based on the current shortfall of 24,000 square feet growing to a need for 27,400 square feet to attain the recommended service level, it is unlikely that an existing branch alone can reconcile the space deficit although strategic improvements to the branches could alleviate certain growth-related pressures that they may incur as populations in the communities that surround them increase over the next 10 years. Section 7.0 of this Space Needs Assessments investigates strategies to bring Ajax Public Library closer to the recommended 0.6 square feet per capita by addressing the current and projected deficit of library space.

Table 3: Projection of Library Space Needs based on Recommended Provision Target, 2021-2031

Year	Forecasted Population	Library Space Needs @ 0.6 ft ² per capita	Deviation from Current Supply of 55,200 ft ²	Service Level Attained @ 55,200 ft ²
2021	132,000	79,200 ft ²	- 24,000 ft ²	0.42 ft ² per capita
2026	135,000	81,000 ft ²	- 25,800 ft ²	0.41 ft ² per capita
2031	137,640	82,600 ft ²	- 27,400 ft ²	0.40 ft ² per capita

Note: library space supply of 55,200 ft² includes the Library Business Office building



McLean Branch Computer Workstations

7.0 Implementation Strategy

Based on analysis contained in Section 6.0 of this Library Space Needs Assessment, Ajax Public Library would need to add 27,400 square feet of net new library space to its system-wide supply, as measured by gross floor area, in order to attain a service level of 0.6 square feet per capita and bring it in line with similar library systems in Durham Region and Ontario.

7.1 Expanding Main Branch

With 33,000 square feet of gross floor area housing more than 110,000 physical items, Main Branch is the largest library in Ajax and viewed as the central destination for library services in the town. Compared to selected Canadian library systems serving populations between 100,000 and 250,000 as well as those in south Durham Region, Ajax Public Library's Main Branch is smaller in size and thus results in a lower square footage per capita. However, it accounts for a similar percentage of system-wide space as the comparators.

Table 4: Central Library Space in Selected Cities with Populations between 100,000 and 250,000

Library System	Size of Central Library (Square Feet)	Central Library as % of System-Wide Space	Central Library Square Feet Per Capita
Burlington Public Library	64,000	60%	0.35
Burnaby Public Library	61,000	59%	0.26
Cambridge Public Library	34,400	48%	0.26
Coquitlam Public Library	34,500	58%	0.27
Regina Public Library	71,414	44%	0.33
Richmond Hill Public Library	73,000	67%	0.34
Richmond Public Library	49,352	71%	0.24
Thunder Bay Public Library	23,300	39%	0.22
Windsor Public Library	101,467	64%	0.47
South Durham			
Clarington	24,000	49%	0.26
Oshawa	62,000	66%	0.37
Pickering	34,165	74%	0.36
Whitby	63,200	82%	0.45
Average – All Systems	53,523	62%	0.32
Average – South Durham	45,841	68%	0.36
Ajax Public Library	33,000	63%	0.25

Source: Canadian Urban Libraries Council, 2017 and selected studies

Assuming that Ajax Public Library were to target the size of its central library at a rate of 0.3 square feet per capita, similar to the benchmark average, the Main Branch would need to be 41,300 square feet in total based on the year 2031 population estimate. This would require an additional 8,300 square feet to be added plus potential replacement of the existing 1,600 square feet of administrative space at the Library Business Office should it be integrated as part of the expansion (for a total of approximately 9,900 square feet).

Undertake an architectural study to determine the feasibility of **expanding the Main Branch by 10,000 to 15,000 square feet.**

It is recommended that Ajax Public Library undertake an architectural design study to determine the feasibility of expanding Main Branch by 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. Such an addition would address between 40% and 65% of the projected 10-year system-wide library space deficiency and position the Main Branch for future population growth beyond 2031.

Expansion potential may be constrained by the fact that the library is situated in between Town Hall and the recently rejuvenated Ajax Memorial Outdoor Pool. Provision of additional parking (whether onsite or nearby) would also need to be factored into account as the existing parking lot can be busy with the intensity of use. There may be an opportunity to expand the Main Branch southwards (towards Town Hall and likely requiring the Library Business Office to be demolished). High level measurements – which should be confirmed – suggest that this area could be capable of adding the recommended 10,000 to 15,000 square feet and possibly more if constructed with a second storey (and/or basement level).

Should the Main Branch expansion be deemed feasible, it would present an opportunity to address inevitable growth-related pressures arising from planned residential and employment intensification activities, including initiatives being advanced by the Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation Strategy (CAISTS).

Components within an Expanded Main Branch

Through a physical expansion of Main Branch – along with a potential reconfiguration of selected existing space to support the expansion – the following functional enhancements should be explored through the architectural design process (at a minimum):

- **Study Space:** a building addition would allow for additional individual and group study space to be provided in an area where residents and workers may have a greater reliance on the public realm. New study spaces should be strategically situated to separate quiet uses from noisier areas within the branch.
- **Makerspace:** while the Library's first makerspace may initially be established at the McLean Branch, a makerspace in the downtown would be an excellent complement to the Main Branch in light of its function as a destination (as well as support creative individuals and industries, youth, and others in the intensifying/diversifying downtown). The recently completed Makerspace Study identifies the

opportunity to convert 930 square feet in the main floor children's room or 1,160 square feet by repurposing the second floor stacks near the elevator. The Main Branch expansion could reconcile loss of these existing uses through relocation, or provides an opportunity to explore whether the Makerspace may be better suited within the new addition itself.

- **Program Room(s):** to allow the Library to respond to growing demands for library programs for all age groups.
- **Storage:** storage is at a premium at all branches. The expansion should include sufficient storage for the library's corporate files as well as general materials, equipment and supplies required for public facing services.
- **Display Space:** the trend toward GLAMs (see Section 4.9) has resulted in certain libraries taking a more prominent role in facilitating the creation and display of creative works. The expanded and reconfigured area should provide display spaces in high foot traffic locations to showcase creations made in the Makerspace, works of local/regional artists, etc.
- **Archival/GLAM Space:** The Town of Ajax and Ajax Public Library have been exploring the merits of having the Library assume a greater role in managing municipal archives and artefacts. Archival services will range from integrating materials into general collections space (including a designated section) to climate controlled rooms and storage. The type and actual amount of space required to manage archives will need to be determined by the Town and Library, and would ideally not be counted as part of the overall 0.6 square feet per capita space target given the specialized nature of archival services and storage.
- **Better Staff Integration:** Ajax Public Library corporate staff can be integrated directly within the branch through a new administrative area, potentially through a second storey addition. This would also allow staff presently housed on the existing second floor – where they have outgrown the space - to be moved to the new office area thereby allowing the Library to reclaim the old space for collections, programming or study space.

- **Business Productivity Space:** the Town’s intensification planning, including the CAISTS, envision more employment along the Harwood Road corridor and other areas near the branch. Designating an area(s) that promote entrepreneurship, business start-ups, and support for existing businesses is encouraged. This may take the form of additional space for computer workstations, leveraging makerspace equipment, meeting rooms equipped with video-conferencing technology, or potentially a dedicated area for business users altogether. This would be put the Library to be on trend with the emergence of office-share / co-working culture and possibly add a new revenue stream.
- **Accessibility & Function Considerations:** any building expansion must reflect accessible design standards that comply with the AODA. Discussions with Library staff indicate that while quality design aesthetics such as high ceilings and glass create a comfortable environment, such aesthetic features will need to consider functional elements such as cleaning, changing light bulbs, etc. Ensuring strong sightlines is also important for staff supervision of the space.
- **Coffee Shop:** library design trends show more branches taking cues from retail aesthetics and culture, with some providing in-branch food and beverage services to encourage comfort and longer visits. The multi-use, multi-service nature of the civic campus / community hub would be attractive to those that use any of the facilities and onsite and the foot traffic potential may increase the financial viability of food and beverage operation (would need to be confirmed through a business plan).

7.2 Enhancing Library Services in “Mid-West” Ajax

The area located west of the Kingston Road and Westney Road corridor is an identified geographic gap but also as an area that will experience higher density development through intensification and infill. Based on existing and projected residential populations, as well as future employment growth, an additional 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of library space is anticipated to be needed to effectively service the central-west areas of Ajax.

There are two plausible options to cost-effectively address growth-related needs for library space based on current and planned infrastructure:

1. Expand and Improve McLean Branch; and/or
2. Construct a New Branch as part of the Pickering Village Community Centre redevelopment.

Since both sites are located in general proximity to one another and whose gross floor areas are shared with other civic spaces, thereby increasing potential constraints, they should be positioned as Neighbourhood Branches.

Expanding & Improving McLean Branch

The McLean Branch's single room floor plan along with a smaller than desired gross floor area and high foot traffic from being co-located within a multi-use community centre results in considerable pressure being placed on public-facing areas for collections and programs, and makes it very difficult to separate noisier uses from quiet areas. The presence of nearby schools also contributes to pressures for research and study space while back-of-house areas are at capacity and arguably affect the ability of in-branch staff to operate efficiently and effectively.

Residential and office/commercial intensification along the Westney Road and Kingston Road corridors is expected to exacerbate pressures on the branch, particularly since it is also drawing from catchment areas previously served by the former Village Branch. Expansion of the branch is required to provide an appropriate amount of space in relation to its usage, whether through an external addition to the community centre or internally re-allocation of community centre space to the library. An architectural design study is recommended to increase the gross floor area by 4,400 square feet, bringing the branch to the 10,000 square foot minimum for a Neighbourhood Branch under the proposed library branch provision model (Section 6.1). The following functional enhancements should be explored through the architectural design process (at a minimum):

- **Makerspace:** The Makerspace Study recommends that the north program room (presently under the Town of Ajax's purview) be transferred to Ajax Public Library and converted to a makerspace. This recommendation is supported by the Needs Assessment and would add 900 square feet to the system-wide supply of library space without having to carry out a physical expansion.
- **Program Room:** addition of an enclosed program room will allow greater opportunity to separate quiet and noisier uses taking place in the library.
- **Study Space:** additional areas designated for individual and group study to address growing demand generated by surrounding areas for these spaces.
- **Common Space & Seating:** the addition would create a more comfortable environment for all library patrons wishing to sit and/or socialize in the branch, something that is presently difficult with overcrowding in the small floor area of the branch at present.
- **Display Space:** the addition presents an opportunity to integrate areas to display creations made in the Makerspace and works of local/regional artists.
- **Back-of-House:** expanded customer service desk along with a staff lunch room, lockers, storage, and space to support inter-branch delivery functions.

Undertake an architectural study to determine the feasibility of **expanding McLean Branch by a minimum of 7,000 square feet.**

Pickering Village Community Centre Library Branch

Ajax Public Library operated a stand-alone branch for many years in the Pickering Village. At 1,600 square feet, the Village Branch was extremely undersized by modern library standards which restricted its ability to house a fulsome range of collections and deliver programs being sought. Due to these functional limitations along with the age of the building being at a point where considerable capital reinvestments were required and the Town contemplating a redevelopment of the entire site, Village Branch was permanently closed in 2018 with many of its users now relying upon McLean Branch which is also undersized by modern standards.

Like the Village Branch, the future of the existing Village Arena and seniors centre continues to be deliberated. The land is owned by the Town of Ajax whose 2021 Recreation & Parks Master Plan (draft) has recommended replacing the aging arena and other onsite recreation facilities with a new community centre containing a gymnasium, fitness studio and seniors centre. In addition, preliminary discussions are ongoing to redevelop the Church Street site as a major mixed-use community containing public and private elements.

Such a mixed-use development presents a strong opportunity to reintroduce library services to the Pickering Village. Library services would strongly complement youth and seniors programming within the broader community centre, particularly if makerspace, genealogy and other age-specific services are available. With elementary and secondary schools located adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the Church Street property, the library may also serve a role in providing educational resources and study space in the Pickering Village. Arts and culture services have long been viewed as a desirable addition to the Pickering Village through which the Library is a strong complement as part of the Town's creative infrastructure while also potentially contributing educational and technological resources should the mixed-use development include an 'innovation' component as part of a broader community hub.

It is also worth noting that a scan of community demographics suggest that areas within and around the Pickering Village are characterized by an older age profile as well as certain indicators of marginalization such as households experiencing low income and diverse cultural backgrounds. This might suggest that the area may have an above-average number of residents that have reduced transportation mobility which increases barriers to accessing services (i.e. they may not be able to rely on private automobiles to reach the library).

Ajax Public Library should engage the Town of Ajax to determine if/how it can contribute to plans to enhance the Pickering Village mixed-use community hub. Whether as a full branch or provision of selected services, the library is seen as a strong addition to the development. In the event that a branch is rationalized, it could be scaled to be smaller than the 10,000 square foot minimum if Ajax Public Library can reasonably gain access to the community centre's program rooms, washrooms and other shared common areas.

Ajax Public Library should engage the Town to **determine how it can contribute to plans to enhance the Pickering Village mixed-use community hub**, whether as a full branch or provision of selected library services.

Alternative Library Branch Location in the Mid-West

In the event that a minimum of 14,000 square feet cannot be added through the expansion of the McLean Branch and/or reintroduction of a neighbourhood branch in the Pickering Village, a new library branch will be required. This new library branch would also be a Neighbourhood Branch with a minimum size of 10,000 square feet in order to move Ajax Public Library closer to the 0.6 square feet per capita standard recommended in the Official Plan and this Library Space Needs Assessment.

Based on the geographic catchment of existing branches relative to current library cardholders shown earlier through Figure 14, a new neighbourhood branch should be situated elsewhere within the Pickering Village or alternatively in southeast Ajax. For the latter a land use planning process is currently underway for a new residential area and community park in the southeast which has the potential to further increase the need for library services in the vicinity. Residents living in between Bayly Street and the Ajax waterfront are largely reliant upon the Main Branch, though some living east of Pickering Beach Road may be willing to travel to Audley Branch.

If constructed here, a neighbourhood branch would provide south-end residents with localized services without having to travel to Main Branch (which can be constrained by parking and transit access for some users). It bears noting, however, that no new community centres are contemplated in the south over the next 10 years and thus opportunities for library to co-locate space and services is presently limited (i.e. a stand-alone branch would likely have to be built if extending library services to south Ajax).

Site selection for a new neighbourhood branch (if deemed required after the recommended branch development strategy has been confirmed through architectural studies and discussions with the Town of Ajax) should take the following factors into account at a minimum:

- Ability to enhance geographic catchment of the library system as a whole and minimize duplications in coverage with existing library branches.
- Land size and land ownership, namely whether an existing Town-owned property can be developed or whether land will have to be purchased;
- Community hub potential including potential co-location with other municipal services (e.g. recreation) or community partners operating in Ajax;
- Access to an arterial road and public transit; and
- Community focal point potential, specifically if the library can be located in a highly visible, prominent location.

7.3 How the Implementation Strategy Impacts Space Needs

Section 6.2 illustrated that attaining the recommended 0.6 square feet per capita across the Ajax Public Library system would require 23,100 square feet of net new library space to be added by the year 2031. The proposed facility development strategy addresses this growth-related requirement through the addition of between 23,000 and 32,000 square feet.

Table 5: Library Space Development Strategy

Library Branch	10-Year Space Allotment
1. Main Branch Expansion	10,000 to 15,000 ft ²
2. McLean Branch Makerspace Addition	900 ft ²
3. McLean Branch Expansion	3,500 ft ²
4. Pickering Village Branch	10,000 ft ²
Net New Library Space Added	24,400 to 29,400 ft²
Total Library Space to be Available System-Wide (based on current supply of 55,200 ft ²)	79,600 to 84,600 ft ²
Per Capita Service Level (based on 2031 population of 137,640)	0.58 to 0.61 ft ² per capita

Note: actual space allocations associated with identified branch expansions must be confirmed through architectural feasibility studies

7.4 Timing of Recommendations

Table 6 proposes a schedule for implementing recommendations arising out of the Needs Assessment. Timing articulated in the table is generally synonymous with priority; higher priority recommendations would be implemented sooner while lower priority actions would be initiated after priority projects have been completed. Ajax Public Library should use a combination of service level targets, demand indicators and adherence to fiscally responsible business practices prior to determining the type and timing of recommended facilities.

Timing assigned to individual recommendations should be considered as preliminary estimates, particularly those identified for construction as architectural studies and discussions with the Town of Ajax will be required to confirm feasibility as well as attaining the population forecasts that underpin the library space needs assessments.

Table 6: Implementation Schedule

Year	Preliminary Recommendation
Ongoing (i.e. 2022 to 2031)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Adopt a centralized three-tiered library branch model consisting of the Main Branch, District Branches and Neighbourhood Branches to guide the long-range planning of library space in Ajax. b) Target a service level of 0.6 square feet of library space per capita, amounting to a total gross floor area of 82,600 square feet across the Ajax Public Library system by the year 2031. c) Construct an additional 27,400 square feet of net new library space by the year 2031.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage the Town of Ajax to determine how Ajax Public Library can be part of the mixed-use community hub being planned for the Pickering Village Community Centre & Arena site. Ajax Public Library’s role could range from delivering selected library services that complement the new community hub’s eventual spaces to providing a 10,000 square foot neighbourhood library branch within the new community centre. 2. Work with Durham Region Transit to extend public transit services to the McLean Branch and Audley Branch, potentially adding bus stops at or near the community centre entrances. 3. Continue discussions with the Town of Ajax to assume municipal archival/artefactual services (including storage) within library branches, noting that allocation of space for specialized services should be provided over and above the recommended system-wide library space target of 0.6 square feet per capita.
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Undertake an architectural design and feasibility study that examines the feasibility of renovating, modernizing and expanding McLean Branch by 7,000 square feet.
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Expand McLean Branch (subject to confirmation through architectural study) 6. Undertake an architectural design and feasibility study that examines the feasibility of renovating, modernizing and expanding Main Branch by 10,000 to 15,000 square feet, as well as a potential reconfiguration of selected space within the existing building.
2025 to 2027 (estimated and TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Construct a library branch as part of the Pickering Village Community Centre redevelopment or alternative location (subject to confirmation through further discussions with the Town of Ajax and/or future design studies)
2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Expand Main Branch (subject to confirmation through architectural study)

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- ⁴ Town of Ajax. 2018. Development Charges Background Study. Schedule 1, p. A-2
- ⁵ Ajax Public Library, Report 336 (spreadsheet). December 2020.
- ⁶ Canadian Urban Libraries Council (Brightsail Research & Consulting). 2017. Space Use Study: Brampton Library, Calgary Public Library and Markham Public Library.
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- ⁸ American Library Association. *The State of America's Libraries 2018: A Report from the American Library Association*. Kathy S. Rosa, ed. 2018. www.ala.org/news/state-americaslibraries-report-2018
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- ¹¹ Ontario Public Libraries. 2020 Statistics.