

= Halifax Central Library =

The Halifax Central Library is a public library in Halifax , Nova Scotia on the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street . It serves as the flagship library of the Halifax Public Libraries , replacing the Spring Garden Road Memorial Library .

A new central library was discussed by library administrators for several decades and approved by the regional council in 2008 . The architects , a joint venture between local firm Fowler Bauld and Mitchell and Schmidt Hammer Lassen of Denmark , were chosen in 2010 through an international design competition . Construction began later that year on a prominent downtown site that had been a parking lot for half a century .

The new library opened in December 2014 and has become a highly popular gathering place . In addition to a book collection significantly larger than that of the former library , the new building houses a wide range of amenities including cafés , an auditorium , and community rooms . The striking architecture is characterised by the fifth floor 's cantilever over the entrance plaza , a central atrium criss @-@ crossed by staircases , and the building 's transparency and relationship to the urban context . The library won a Lieutenant Governor ? s Design Award in Architecture for 2014 .

= = History = =

= = = Planning = = =

The Spring Garden Road main library , opened in 1951 , had been considered inadequate by library administrators for several decades . The first report mentioning a replacement building was published in 1971 . An expansion built in 1974 was quickly outgrown . A 1987 assessment noted that the spaces within were " self @-@ contained and inflexible " and that " study space and comfortable reading areas are presently the focus of serious public complaint ... services are cramped and over crowded . "

In the mid @-@ 1990s the municipalities of Halifax , Dartmouth , Bedford , and Halifax County were amalgamated , and a new regional library board was created . In 1995 , the Joint Amalgamation Committee of the merged libraries " agreed that a new central library would be needed to serve the new Halifax Regional Library system and that the site should remain in the present downtown area . " They cited numerous problems with the original building . In addition to its small size (3 @,@ 594 square metres [38 @,@ 690 sq ft]) , technological improvements were hampered by poor wiring and difficulty laying cable in mid @-@ floor locations . Accessibility was poor due to the numerous stairs , levels , and an undersized elevator . Other problems with the building included leaks , asbestos , inoperable windows , the lack of a sprinkler system , inadequate climate control , ceilings as low as 1 @.@ 95 m (6 ft 5 in) , and the lack of numerous services found at other modern libraries .

Following the merger , the new library board undertook extensive planning for a new facility in the hope that a new central library might be part of the 1999 commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the city . The library board commissioned an architectural study , released in 1997 , recommending a new central library of approximately 8 @,@ 800 square metres (95 @,@ 000 sq ft) after concluding a renovation of the existing library would " not result in significant cost savings " and would lead to a less efficient building . Furthermore , it recommended building the new library on a different site in order to avoid costly temporary relocation . This study considered six different sites for the new library and recommended the lot at Queen and Clyde Streets , then a municipal parking lot . The projected cost of construction was just short of \$ 24 million at 1997 prices .

The recommendation for a new library was echoed in a 2004 needs assessment and master plan study for the overall library system . The central library was identified as the " first priority " for the library board in terms of capital development , with implementation recommended by 2009 . The study found agreement among survey respondents that the library should be located in downtown Halifax , being the core of the region and an anticipated area of growth in the regional plan .

Following the 2004 demolition of the nearby former Halifax Infirmary , planning and public consultation began , as part of the Spring Garden Road & Queen Street Joint Public Lands Study , in order to determine the future of the glut of vacant public lands in the area . The lot directly on this prime intersection was closely considered as the site of either a new central library or a justice centre , consolidating other courthouse facilities around the city . The site had been occupied by Bellevue House , the army commandant 's house from the 19th century until it was demolished in 1955 . It had then remained a parking lot into the 21st century . In June 2007 , regional council voted to approve " in principle , designation of the property at the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street as the site of the Central Library " and to initiate negotiations for the acquisition of that land from the province . These negotiations , concluded in January 2010 , resulted in a land swap : the municipality acquired the Queen and Spring Garden site from the province in exchange for the former Queen Elizabeth High School and Birk 's (Barrington and George streets) lands , plus \$ 1 @. @ 9 million " in recognition of the higher value of the provincially owned land . "

On 12 August 2008 , regional council voted to approve the library project in principle and direct municipal staff to develop a financial plan for the project . On 28 April 2009 , the council passed a motion to advance the library as a project under the Building Canada Fund , a federal fund that financed projects jointly with local governments from 2007 to 2014 . This resulted in an \$ 18 @. @ 3 million contribution from the federal government .

= = = Architect selection and public consultations = = =

The architects for the new library were chosen through an international competition for a design contract worth C \$ 4 @. @ 3 million . Four architectural teams were shortlisted , each a partnership between a local and a non @-@ local firm . The winning scheme , a joint venture by Danish firm Schmidt Hammer Lassen and Fowler Bauld & Mitchell of Halifax , was selected in March 2010 . The other shortlisted teams were Lydon Lynch with HOK , Barrie and Langille with Moriyama and Teshima , and Shore Tilbe Irwin + Partners with John K. Dobbs .

The library governance stated they sought to " involve as many people as possible in the public consultation process for the new central library . " It was suggested in The Coast , a weekly newspaper , that this emphasis on public involvement was a reaction to a negative public response toward a proposed redesign of Point Pleasant Park after its partial destruction in Hurricane Juan . Early planning was undertaken in three public consultation phases during 2008 . Five more public meetings and workshops were held in 2010 following the selection of the design architects . The final design was unveiled by the architects during the fifth of these meetings on 4 November 2010 . A final public event was held at Pier 21 on 14 November 2012 .

= = = War memorial issue = = =

The Spring Garden Road Memorial Library was named after its status as a war memorial and displays several commemorative artefacts , including two Books of Remembrance containing the names of thousands of Halifax County residents who gave their lives in the First World War , Second World War , and Korean War . A page is turned in each book every Remembrance Day . A Silver Cross is also on display . The building contains a plaque reading , " This building was erected in memory of those who gave their lives in defence of their Country , 1914 ? 1918 ; 1939 ? 1945 . For their Faith , for their Courage , for their Sacrifice , We Will Remember Them . "

Some residents voiced concern that with the closure of the former building the war memorial will effectively disappear . Local author and historian Blair Beed questioned why the term " memorial " was not carried over to the new building , and proposed that " Halifax Memorial Library " would be a more appropriate name lest wartime sacrifices be pushed aside and forgotten . He also worried about the fate of the historical artefacts on display . Another resident suggested that such concerns were not given serious consideration during the public consultation process .

Library management responded that the war commemoration would be incorporated into the local history section of the library , and that the two remembrance books would be joined by a third

recognizing those who died in conflicts following the Korean War . They also stated that a " few elements of the existing wartime display such as the Silver Cross , flags and standards " would be transferred to the Maritime Command Museum at Admiralty House , CFB Halifax . The three Books of Remembrance are now on display in a glass case next to the local history room .

= = = Construction and opening = = =

Before construction began , an archaeological dig was undertaken to evaluate the remains of Bellevue House . The land was originally purchased in 1800 by the Duke of Kent , who was based in the city in order to command British forces in North America . Subsequent British commanders took residence in the house , built 1801 and described as an " almost palatial residence " that hosted members of the Royal Family during visits to the colony . It was destroyed in a 1885 fire , but rebuilt . The British left in the early 20th century and the structure was demolished after it was acquired by the Nova Scotia Technical College in 1955 . The site then remained a parking lot for over half a century , meaning the foundation of older structures was preserved under the asphalt . This stands in contrast to the site of the former infirmary next door , where the deep foundation rendered the site archaeologically insignificant . In addition to the foundation of the residence , the archaeological dig uncovered numerous small artefacts including china , cutlery and an 1860 Nova Scotia penny .

Construction of the library by EllisDon began shortly thereafter . Following excavation and blasting for the underground car park , the foundation was poured in 2012 . In May 2014 , the library hosted a tour for journalists and officials from all levels of government . Halifax mayor Mike Savage stated that the new library is " not simply something that ' s nice to have . It is important and critical to the future of our city . Because more than ever , for a city to succeed , we need to be invested in the knowledge economy . We need to ensure that our citizens have access to all forms of learning . ?

The total cost of the building was \$ 57 @. @ 6 million , of which \$ 18 @. @ 3 million came from the federal government via the Building Canada Fund , \$ 13 million from the provincial government , and the remainder (\$ 26 @. @ 3 million) from the municipality . The municipal contribution was primarily generated from the sale of the empty lots around the library site .

The library was completed in late 2014 following the transfer of materials from the former library across the street , which closed on 30 August . It opened to the public on Saturday , 13 December 2014 to an estimated 12 @, @ 000 visitors who enjoyed a day of performances and festivities . The first six weeks of operation saw 272 @, @ 000 visitors , who collectively checked out over 167 @, @ 700 items .

= = Design and reception = =

The library is a five @-@ storey structure comprising about 11 @, @ 000 square metres (120 @, @ 000 sq ft) of space , and was designed to accommodate a book collection 50 per cent larger than that of the former Spring Garden Memorial Library . A skylighted atrium , criss @-@ crossed by stairs and walkways , spans the interior height of the structure . The main lobby and children 's collection are concentrated on the lower floors , while much of the upper floors are designated as quiet areas . A rooftop terrace with seating offers a broad view of Downtown , the South End , and Halifax Harbour .

The design , said to resemble a stack of books , has garnered international attention and was featured by CNN as one of ten " eye @-@ popping " new buildings of 2014 . The building topped a list of " high @-@ design libraries " compiled by enRoute and was covered on numerous architecture websites . In the 2014 " Best of Halifax " awards , ranked annually by readers of The Coast , the library was voted the " Best Thing To Happen In Halifax In The Past Year " and the " Best Effort To Improve Halifax " . SNC @-@ Lavalin , the structural and civil engineer , was awarded the " Engineering a Better Canada Award " by the Association of Canadian Engineering Companies for their work on the library . The building was also shortlisted for the World Building of the Year Award in the Civic and Community category at the 2015 World Architecture Festival in Singapore .

The Nova Scotia Association of Architects selected the library to receive the Award of Merit at the

Lieutenant Governor's Design Awards in Architecture . The award was presented in 2015 by Brigadier General J.J. Grant . The awards jury commented : " Without doubt , the new Halifax Central Library has done more to transform the discussion of contemporary architecture in Halifax than any building in the past 40 years . The Halifax Central Library was a real catalyst of local , public and architectural conversation in Halifax ; its program and location has reconstructed the way locals and visitors interact with a building filled with knowledge . "

An architect from Fowler , Bauld & Mitchell stated that the library now sees an average of 6 000 visitors daily , a " huge increase " in patronage over the former Spring Garden Road Memorial Library .

= = Programme = =

The library is fully wheelchair accessible , with multiple elevators . There are public use touchscreen computers , a dedicated computer lab , wireless internet , and conference and community rooms . An automatic conveyor belt system links the book drops to a dedicated sorting room . It handled 80 000 books in July 2015 .

The library 's open design and central location enables it to host community events and festivals . In the first year of operation it has served as a venue for major annual Halifax events including Nocturne and The Word on the Street . It hosted the Duke of Edinburgh 's Award ceremony in November 2015 attended by Prince Edward .

= = = Cafés = = =

The building houses two café spaces , one at ground level and one on the fifth floor . Patrons of the latter café have access to a rooftop patio area as well as the " Halifax Living Room " housed in the cantilevered portion of the building overlooking Spring Garden Road . The Living Room was designed as an airy , indoor public space with views of both Citadel Hill and Halifax Harbour as well as the civic square below . The ground floor café , in the corner of the building nearest the intersection , opens earlier than the rest of the library . The concession to operate from both spaces was won by Pavia Gallery Espresso Bar and Café of Herring Cove , who beat out Second Cup and Uncommon Grounds . Pavia holds a ten - year contract with an option for an additional seven years .

The ground floor space is the " main café " with the same offerings as Pavia 's Herring Cove location , while the smaller upstairs café serves light refreshments only . Pavia plans to hold three art related panel discussions at the library each year .

= = = Artwork = = =

Following a request for proposals seeking a " signature public artwork " to be incorporated into the new library , painter and NSCAD alumnus Cliff Eyland was awarded the \$ 430 000 commission for his proposal to produce 5 000 miniature paintings on medium density fibreboard cut to the size of old library catalog index cards .

Eyland , who also worked as a curator at the former Technical University of Nova Scotia next door (now Dalhousie University 's School of Architecture and Planning) , ended up producing a total of 6 000 paintings divided into two installations . At the ground floor , Library Cards comprises 5 000 paintings behind the main reception . A further 1 000 paintings , " eye popping , two colour abstracts of books leaning against each other " , decorate the Living Room in the fifth floor cantilever . This smaller installation is titled Book Shelf Paintings .

The Library Cards paintings cover a variety of themes and subjects , including landscapes , portraits , abstract pieces , and musings on history and libraries . The artist joked , " there are grey landscapes to remind you about why you stay indoors in Nova Scotia to read " and said that portraits of staff at the Spring Garden Road and Halifax North Memorial libraries , photographed by Mary Ann Archibald , were painted and had subsequently been recognized by some of their subjects

. He also stated that the library commission is the biggest installation he has done to date .

= = = Auditorium = = =

The ground floor houses a 300 @-@ seat auditorium which also serves as a reading space when not in use for performances . Library CEO Judith Hare stated that the space would complement a recording studio , geared toward young people , planned elsewhere in the library : " people can make their own music ... but also they ? ll have a place to perform as well . " In 2012 the auditorium was named Paul O ? Regan Hall following a \$ 1 million donation by the O ? Regan family in honour of the late businessman and philanthropist . Government funding only covered the cost of the building , so donations will go toward expanding the book collection and purchasing new computers and special equipment . The hall is fitted with stowable seats , acoustic ceiling baffles , a video screen , and professional sound and lighting installations .

The hall boasts a \$ 62 @,@ 000 Yamaha grand piano donated by local philanthropist and musician Peggy Corkum in May 2015 .

= = = Environmental sustainability = = =

The building design aims to achieve LEED Gold certification from the Canada Green Building Council , in part by incorporating energy and water saving design features such as rainwater harvesting for flushing water , computerized building management , use of local species in landscape design , and automatic lighting control . Low @-@ emission interior finishes have been used to improve indoor air quality , and a green housekeeping policy seeks to reduce exposure of occupants to contaminants .

The library supports the use of public transportation and active transportation by virtue of its central location in a dense , walkable district served by numerous bus routes , and by providing onsite bike parking .

= = = Programming by floor = = =

= = Transportation = =

The library is accessible by public bus transit , as it is located on Spring Garden Road . It is served by numerous Halifax Transit bus routes . Routes 1 , 10 , 14 , 20 and 80 provide service from 6 : 00 am until midnight daily . Route 1 provides service to Dartmouth and Mumford Terminal at 10 @-@ minute headways .