



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Campbell River Council affirms support of new downtown library**

*Wednesday, April 14, 2021* – Campbell River Council has confirmed support for building a new two-storey, 20,000 square foot library on the site of the current branch at 1240 Shoppers Row.

“This is an important step forward in ensuring that the people of Campbell River receive a state-of-the-art new library,” says Campbell River Mayor, Andy Adams. “By voting to continue with project planning on the existing library site, our goal of developing a safe, vibrant, and dynamic cultural precinct in the core of our city can continue. This is the right location and the right time for a new library for the people of Campbell River.”

In recent weeks, there has been some discussion about the downtown location and whether demolishing the existing library is the best path forward. Some of the factors that influenced Council’s decision included the fact that the site is City-owned and would not require purchasing any new land, as well as costs associated with refurbishing the existing building.

Rebuilding on the current site will also enhance safety in the downtown core. The new library is anticipated to incorporate what is currently a courtyard. This change and other features will create clear sightlines and an open layout to encourage positive activity and behaviour in and around the branch.

Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) and the City will host two shared public consultations. The first will gather feedback and ideas on the design and features of the library; the second will present the proposed renderings and provide answers to outstanding questions. As a result of the ongoing pandemic, VIRL and City staff are currently planning how to offer safe and extensive consultations that include connecting with Indigenous community members, the business community, families, newcomers, seniors, and youth.

Details on project progress and construction timelines, as well as dates, locations, and formats for community members to provide ideas and insights will be provided when available at [virl.bc.ca](http://virl.bc.ca) or [campbellriver.ca](http://campbellriver.ca).

“Planning, designing, and ultimately building capital projects of this size and scope are always complex and multifaceted,” says Chair of the Vancouver Island Regional Library

Board of Trustees, Gaby Wickstrom. "Since 2011, the Board of Trustees has supported the substantial renovations or new builds of 18 branches in communities large and small. There are always challenges to overcome, but VIRL staff have learned from experience and are ready to apply their expertise to this exciting and vital project."

The budget of \$14 million includes the cost of construction, furnishings, technology infrastructure, and site preparation. Because VIRL is a regional system with a pooled budget, the costs of the new library will be shared by member jurisdictions rather than paid for by Campbell River taxpayers alone through their regional district contribution.

Costs are being finalized on preliminary design concepts, and are expected to be higher than originally forecast due to rising lumber and construction costs during the pandemic. VIRL anticipates receiving updated cost estimates in the very near future.

The City of Campbell River has committed to providing a no-cost lease to VIRL, demolishing the existing facility, and to servicing the site with sewage, water, drainage and CR Municipal Broadband service.

"The Campbell River library is already a bustling place," says VIRL's Executive Director, Rosemary Bonanno. "In 2019, nearly 300,000 people visited the branch to participate in programming, find their next great read, use a public computer, seek refuge from the cold, or plan their next business venture. As Campbell River moves forward with its economic development goals, the new library is poised to become a beacon of innovation and a centre of the community. It will become a place that sparks ideas, inspiration, literacy, and renewal."

Other pre-pandemic statistics for the branch include:

- More than 260,000 items circulated
- More than 10,000 program attendees
- A total value of \$562 for a Campbell River library card

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### **For more information**

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## Background Information

### How much is the current library building worth – and why wouldn't we build the library in another downtown location and keep the current building for another purpose?

- While the assessed value and market value of the current building is more than \$2 million (\$700,000 for the land and approx. \$1.96 million for the building), considerable investment would be required to keep it operating in good condition.
- In a 2017 facilities condition assessment, the City identified approximately \$1.2 million in costs required over the next 25 years (on top of regular maintenance).
- Estimates established in 2017 will have already increased due to inflation and rising construction costs.
- The budget to prepare and service the site for new construction is approximately \$800,000.
- The current facility is only half the size required to meet community needs for a new library, and the current construction doesn't allow for a cost-effective major addition.
- If the library was relocated rather than rebuilt on the current site, the City would be required to pay for a new downtown property and to prepare that site, which would likely include building demolition costs on top of property purchase price.
- Using the existing City-owned site is the most cost-effective option.
- Rebuilding on the existing site also offers an opportunity to redesign the property for improved downtown safety.

The following information provides an overview of the City's involvement in this project.

#### 1. **What is the project?**

This project consists of building a new two-storey, 20,000 square foot library at the current location, 1240 Shoppers Row. The project is in partnership between the City and the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) Board. The City's commitment and contribution is to provide a construction-ready site. Work to prepare the site includes: environmental, geotechnical and hazardous materials assessments, modifications to the Tidemark Theatre, building demolition, and connections to water, sewer, storm drain and high-speed internet service through CRadvantage, the City's fibre optic network that provides affordable, enterprise level access for businesses and public facilities.

#### 2. **When is the work going to take place?**

Demolition and site preparation servicing will begin in 2021 and be completed by the end of the year.

#### 3. **What is the cost of the City's portion of the project?**

The City's 2021 budget includes up to \$798,000 for site preparation. This funding comes from the Downtown Tax Exemption Reserve rather than from residential property taxation.

#### 4. **Who will be constructing the work?**

The City's portion of this project (site preparation and connection to services) will be

delivered by contract service providers and will likely be delivered under several distinct packages; details are not confirmed at this time. The VIRL board will determine the construction details of the new library boundary.

**5. How will traffic be managed during construction?**

Traffic management during this work will be the responsibility of the contractor doing the work. Although we do not expect much traffic disruption in the area, there will be some on the 1200 block of Shoppers Row during the demolition of the existing building.

**6. Who will be designing the new library?**

The new library is being delivered by the VIRL team. Please visit: [virl.bc.ca](http://virl.bc.ca) for more answers to this and other questions pertaining to the construction of the new building.

The following information provides an overview of VIRL's involvement in this project.

**1. Why are you building a new library in Campbell River?**

The current space does not adequately serve the population of Campbell River. The Board of Trustees developed minimum size requirements as noted in the Consolidated Facilities Master Plan.

Residents of Campbell River need a library that can properly serve this growing and dynamic community. A true 21st Century library provides services and resources to families, businesses and entrepreneurs, artists, Indigenous communities, newcomers, and everyone else in the community.

For a growing city like Campbell River, the new library will become a showcase and centerpiece of innovation, learning, literacy, and connection.

**2. Why was the downtown location selected?**

The City chose this location as the most affordable and suitable re-development site within Campbell River's cultural precinct.

As part of this project, the City of Campbell River is responsible for providing a serviced, construction-ready property. This includes demolishing the existing building, and providing sewage, water, drainage and CR Municipal Broadband service.

The existing property is City-owned, which reduces costs significantly. To develop on a privately-owned site, the City would have the added cost of purchasing a new property.

This location also aligns with Campbell River's economic development goals and the community's vision for a renewed and revitalized downtown core.

Public engagement during the City's Downtown Refresh workshops established this downtown area as the preferred location for cultural facilities and spaces. The library combined with Tidemark Theatre, Spirit Square, the community centre and art gallery are key components of the cultural precinct.

**3. What is the current status of the new library?**

We don't have a firm date for when construction will start or the new library will open.

With the site now selected, VIRL is in the early stages of working with an architect and planning for a temporary location to continue to provide service. The City is actively preparing to demolish the building (scheduled for late 2021). We'll provide more information as details are confirmed.

#### **4. What is the budget for the new library?**

The budget of \$14 million includes the cost of construction, furnishings, and technology infrastructure.

For the new library in Campbell River, funding was secured through a loan from the Municipal Finance Authority to the Strathcona Regional District, who will transfer the borrowing proceeds to VIRL. Because VIRL is a regional system with a pooled budget, the costs of the new library will be shared by member jurisdictions rather than paid for by Campbell River taxpayers alone through their regional district contribution.

Campbell River is one of 38 municipalities and regional districts, with a total population of almost 465,000, that comprise VIRL's membership. As a co-op, members pool their resources to cover the costs of library services and important Capital Projects like the one in Campbell River. This sustainable costing model has allowed VIRL to build or refurbish 17 libraries since 2011 in communities large, small, and remote.

Once the new library is built, the City of Campbell River has committed to providing a no-cost lease to VIRL.

#### **5. Who is preparing the site for construction and what are the costs?**

The City of Campbell River's 2021 budget includes up to \$798,000 for site preparation work. This funding comes from the Downtown Tax Exemption Reserve rather than from residential property taxation. Work to prepare the site includes environmental, geotechnical and hazardous materials assessments, modifications to the Tidemark Theatre, building demolition, and site servicing connections to water, sewer and CRadvantage, the municipal internet service.

#### **6. How much did Campbell River contribute to VIRL in 2020?**

Campbell River's annual contribution to VIRL was approximately \$1.6 million.

Because of VIRL's pooled funding model, the costs of the new library will be shared by all member municipalities and regional districts.

#### **7. Will I have an opportunity to provide feedback about the new library?**

Yes, VIRL and the City of Campbell River will provide opportunities for public feedback and ideas.

We are in the early stages of planning our public engagements and will provide more information as planning unfolds.

As part of the public engagement process, people will be able to share their preferences

for services, amenities and design elements for the new facility.