

Sylvan Lake Municipal Library **Plan of Service** *Building Capacity*



Introduction

Libraries are essential cornerstones in our communities, serving as bridges between information and opportunity, knowledge and empowerment. Sylvan Lake Municipal Library has, like other libraries, evolved into a dynamic community hub that serves people in diverse ways, while supporting municipal and provincial priorities that strengthen the fabric of our community.



Libraries make it easy to access information in ways that transform lives. They eliminate economic barriers that might otherwise prevent individuals from accessing books, databases, academic journals, and digital resources. A single library card opens doors to millions of resources that would otherwise cost people thousands of dollars to purchase. This equal access principle ensures that everyone has the same opportunity to explore Shakespeare, learn coding, or research post-secondary school options.

Collections and programs offered by Sylvan Lake Municipal Library further expands this accessibility, serving diverse communities and preserving cultural connections. By providing materials in other languages, and offering English as a Second Language resources, libraries help everyone feel welcomed and valued.



Building Capacity for the Future

As Sylvan Lake's population continues to grow, so does the community's demand for expanded library services, space, and resources.

The need to provide adequate materials and programming to meet public expectations is more pressing than ever. According to standards set by the Municipal Affairs Public Library Services Branch, the current library facility is already significantly undersized. These standards recommend that libraries maintain a minimum collection of 2.2 items per capita and operate within a space that accommodates collections, computer access, programming, community gatherings, and more. The

current library facility, at just 7,152 square feet, falls significantly short of meeting community needs. Based on standards set by the Municipal Affairs Public Library Services Branch, a facility of 30,066 to 46,702 square feet is required to adequately serve Sylvan Lake's present population and accommodate future growth. This expanded space would support essential services such as collections, technology access, programming, and community engagement. This plan of service outlines

a five-year program to introduce new in-demand resources and programs, while working toward relocating to a new facility by 2030.



Current Facility is

7,152
Square Feet

Expanding

30,066

to

46,702

Square Feet
is Required



Public Needs Assessment

Public Needs Assessment

In spring, 2025, Sylvan Lake Municipal Library undertook several public engagement activities in order to better understand public and patron priorities. The purpose for collecting these data was to inform the 2026-31 Plan of Service. An online survey was conducted over 35 days and received 305 responses. The typical respondent was a full-time resident of Sylvan Lake, female, aged 35-64 years.

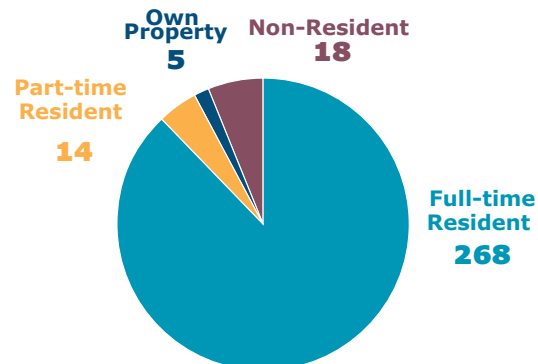
Additionally, Sylvan Lake Municipal Library staff conducted in-person engagement by participating in the Sylvan Lake Trade Show, and posting questions in the library on four occasions. In-library engagement took the form of questions posted to a whiteboard, with a series of possible responses from which people could choose. In most instances, people were quite aligned between the survey findings and in-person priorities.

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly residents of Sylvan Lake. As a community that has a high non-resident population, particularly in summer, special attention was paid to ensuring the voices of residents were heard.

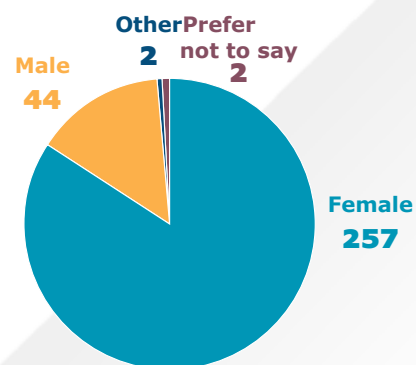
Staff Needs Assessment

On February 26, staff, and the Sylvan Lake Municipal Library Board Chair, participated in a full-day workshop to explore priorities and outline requirements for this five-year Plan of Service. Staff were asked to imagine the future: at the end of the five-year period, what would the Library look like? What services would be offered? What collection updates would be made? These results have been combined into a single summary that incorporates public priorities. This gives us a snapshot of the path forward.

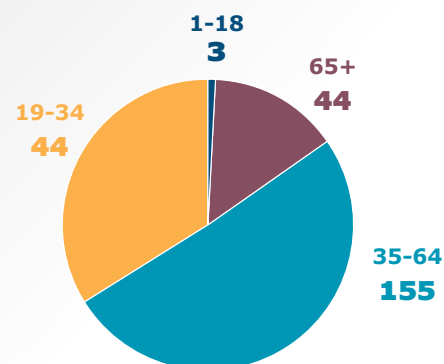
Residency



Gender



Age



Key Findings by Priority Area

Programming Priorities

Staff identified essential programming needs centered on practical life skills development, with particular emphasis on life skills for teens and adults, financial literacy education, and specialized programming designed for men. The public response aligned closely with staff perspectives, prioritizing teen-focused programming and life skills development while also expressing strong interest in seniors-focused programming options.



Ideal Library Experience

Staff envisioned an enhanced library experience that would include dedicated homeschooling areas with corresponding programming, increased focus on serving men, teens, and tweens, and expanded life skills programming covering practical topics such as handyman skills and gardening. They also emphasized the need for additional physical space to accommodate growing collections.

Public feedback highlighted different priorities, with strong support for story-time programming, expansion of the library of things concept, and the development of English as a Second Language programming to serve diverse community needs

Flexible Spaces

The vision for flexible library spaces revealed distinct perspectives between staff and public users. Staff prioritized functional spaces including a community kitchen, enhanced technology areas, and quiet spaces for focused work and study.

Public preferences centered on comfort and family-friendly amenities, specifically requesting comfortable reading areas, dedicated children's play and reading spaces, and café facilities to enhance the social aspect of library visits.



Collection Preferences

Staff recommendations for collection development focused on practical and technological resources, including handyman repair guides and take-home project kits, expanded technology collections, a broader library of things offering, and increased digital reading options to meet evolving user preferences.

Public collection preferences emphasized creative and recreational resources, with requests for musical instrument lending programs, technology lending services, and hobby and craft materials to support personal interests and skill development.

However, both staff and public feedback underscored a strong desire for more physical books and space to grow the library's core collections.



Community Connections

Staff identified opportunities to strengthen the library's role as a community hub through enhanced coordination with other social services and community organizations, as well as establishing mutual referral systems with other agencies to better serve patrons with diverse needs.

Public feedback emphasized outreach and engagement activities, including regular visits to seniors' centers, participation in farmers' markets to increase library visibility, and targeted teen engagement programs to connect with younger community members.



Accessibility and Inclusivity

Staff priorities for accessibility and inclusivity focused on educational programming and infrastructure, specifically literacy classes, computer training programs, and quiet spaces that accommodate different learning and working styles.

Public accessibility priorities centered on digital equity and sensory considerations, requesting reliable public computer access with free WiFi, increased digital content, sensory-friendly areas for individuals with different needs, and home delivery services for those unable to visit the library in person.



Emerging Needs

Staff identified facility-based emerging needs including a dedicated gaming area separate from general computer use, quiet walled spaces that can be reserved for private use, and expanded programming spaces to accommodate larger events and activities.

Public emerging needs reflected contemporary interests in sustainability and technology, with requests for gardening and sustainability programming, maker spaces with advanced technology access, and expanded accessibility services to serve community members with varying abilities.



2026 to 2030 Plan of Service



The engagement process revealed both alignment and complementary perspectives between staff and public priorities. While staff focused heavily on practical skills development and operational improvements, public feedback emphasized comfort, accessibility, and diverse programming options. These findings provide a comprehensive foundation for developing a Plan of Service that addresses both operational excellence and community satisfaction.

The five priority areas identified through this process offer a roadmap for library collection and service development that balances professional expertise with community-driven needs, ensuring that future services will effectively serve all segments of the population while maintaining operational efficiency and maintain staff innovation.



1. Empower Lifelong Learning and Life Skills Development

Objective: Expand programming that supports personal growth, practical skills, and community resilience.

Key Activities

- A. Expand homeschooling resources and support, including dedicated space and programming.
- B. Offer life skills workshops for teens and adults (e.g., financial literacy, handyman skills, gardening).
- C. Enhance ESL and literacy programs to support newcomers and adult learners.
- D. Develop targeted programming for underserved groups, including men, seniors, and teens.

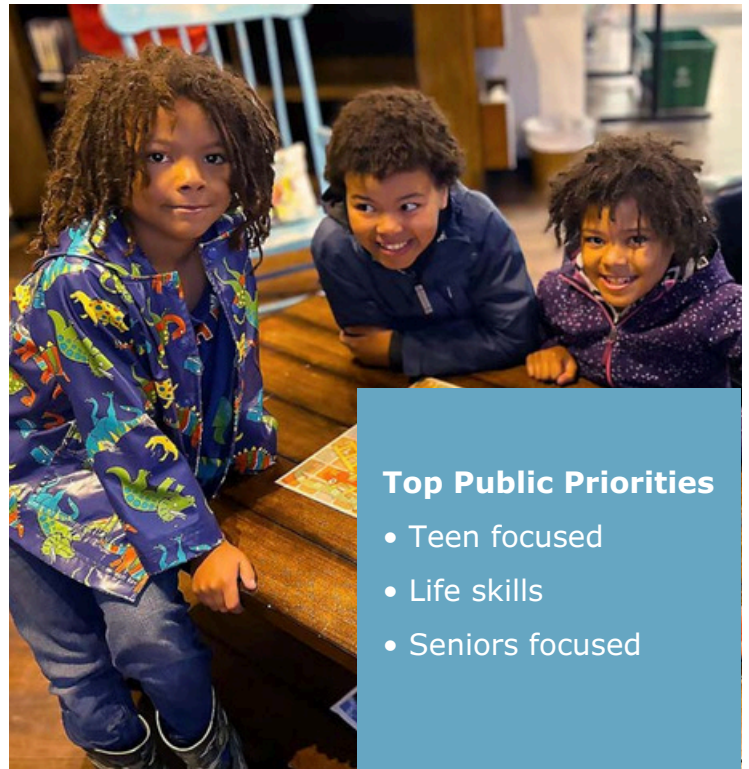
Actions 2026-2030

Even before the library transitions into a larger space, there are important steps we can take to prepare for a full launch of this initiative:

● Build Community Connections:

Library staff will begin identifying and developing relationships with local experts, organizations, and hobbyists who could lead life skills workshops in the future. This includes:

- Networking with local businesses and tradespeople (e.g., financial advisors, gardeners, repair specialists).
- Reaching out to community groups, schools, and nonprofits to identify potential partners.
- Creating a database of potential workshop hosts and areas of expertise.



Top Public Priorities

- Teen focused
- Life skills
- Seniors focused

● Implement New Programming:

Library Staff will begin to implement programs and making resources available within the scope and limitations of the current space restrictions

- Introduce one in-library program targeting the homeschool community and additional off-site programs.
- Offer one life-skill program/event per quarter.
- Partner with community groups to deliver off-site programs targeting underserved audiences, building strong relationships for future expansion.
- Partner with local groups to support ESL and language learning events off site.
- Create Database of life skill tutorials and resources.

By establishing these connections early, the library will be ready to quickly schedule and promote workshops once more space is available.

- Offer comprehensive homeschooling support, including dedicated areas and tailored programming.

2. Expand and Diversify Collections and Lending Services

Objective: Broaden access to traditional and non-traditional resources that reflect community interests.

Key Activities

- A. Grow the Library of Things to include tools, musical instruments, hobby kits, and take-home repair projects.
- B. Increase digital collections and technology lending (e.g., tablets, hotspots, maker kits).
- C. Curate multiformat reading collection that support DIY learning, crafts, and technology exploration.

Actions 2026-2030

While we await the larger facility, we can lay the groundwork for a successful enhanced Library of Things launch:

● Engage Local Businesses and Partners:

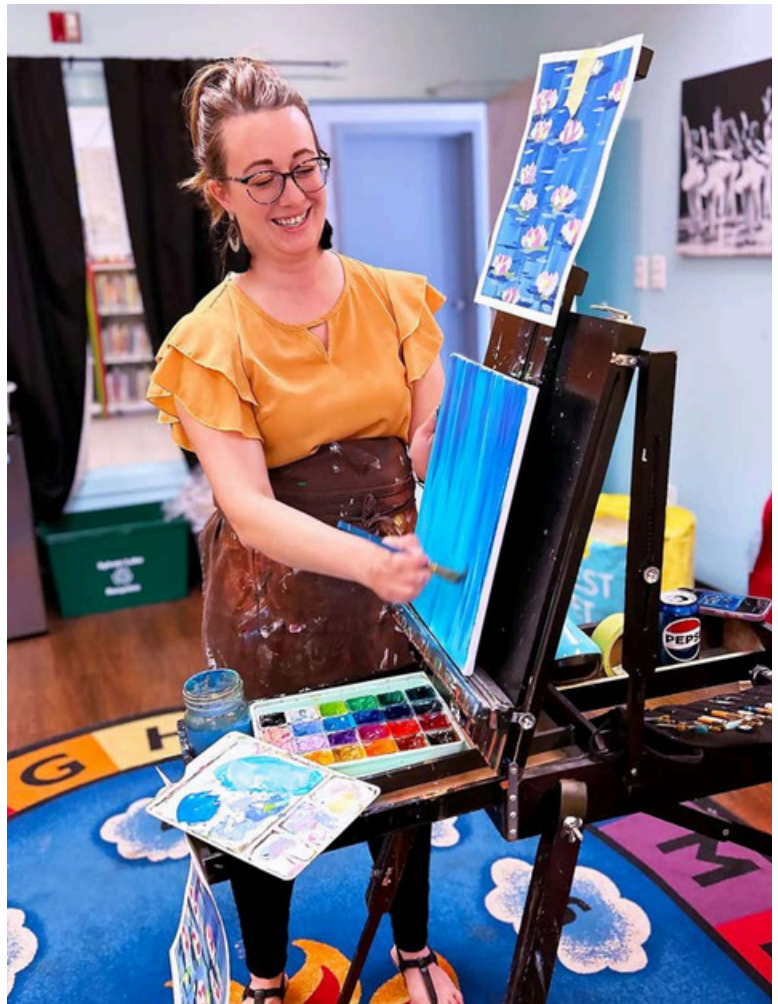
Begin conversations with local businesses, service clubs, and community members about donating or sponsoring items for the Library of Things. This early outreach will help build a strong and well-supported collection by the time the new library opens.

● Plan for Safe Storage and Security:

Identify secure and accessible storage locations within the current library to house new Library of Things items that cannot be circulated within the current library space. Ensure they can be safely stored and tracked until they are in circulation.

● Develop Lending Policies and Procedures:

Update the process for borrowing and returning Library of Things items, including guidelines for higher-value items, repair or replacement costs, and borrower responsibility and liability.



Top Public Priorities:

- Library of Things
- Gardening/ sustainability,
- Maker spaces and technology,
- Accessibility services

● Pre-Expansion implementation:

- Invest in an enhanced digital reading collection (e.g. e-books and audiobooks).
- Identify, obtain, circulate, and curate enhanced technology lending program.
- Dedicate a portion of the collection budget to enhance multiformat reading collection materials that support DIY learning, crafts, and equipment use—ensuring space is available to grow these collections.

3. Strengthen Community Partnerships and Outreach

Objective: Deepen connections with local organizations and bring library services into the community.

Key Activities

- A. Collaborate with social services, clubs, and agencies for mutual referrals and shared programming.
- B. Expand outreach to seniors' centres, farmer's markets, and youth engagement events.
- C. Promote inclusive programming that reflects the diversity and evolving needs of Sylvan Lake.
- D. Host community partners (e.g. social workers, Elders-in-residence, writer in residence) in shared office spaces.

Actions 2026-2030

- **Build and Deepen Community Connections:**

Actively reach out to cultural organizations, social service agencies, local businesses, schools, and community groups to develop partnerships that will inform inclusive programming.

- **Promote Diversity and Representation:**

Ensure these partnerships reflect the community's demographic and cultural diversity, helping the library design programs that resonate with and serve all community members.

- **Expand Outreach to Seniors' Centres, Farmer's Markets, and Youth Engagement Events.**

- **Provide Expanded Outreach Services and Pop-up Library Events in Neighbourhoods.**



Top Public Priorities:

- Seniors' Centre visits
- Farmer's Markets
- Teen engagement programs



4. Develop a Future-Ready Library Facility

Objective: Build a modern, sustainable library that meets current and future community needs.

Key Activities

- A. Design a larger, purpose-built facility that supports expanded programming, collections, and services to meet the needs of the growing population. The facility should meet the standards of the Municipal Affairs Public Library Services Branch for space and number of items per capita.
- B. Incorporate net zero design principles to ensure environmental sustainability and long-term cost savings.
- C. Include dedicated spaces for technology, makerspaces, gaming, and quiet study.
- D. Enhance universal use to include quiet zones, sensory-free areas and bookable private spaces
- E. Ensure the facility is fully accessible, with barrier-free washrooms, improved navigation, and inclusive design.
- F. Provide adequate staff workspaces and on-site storage to improve service delivery and safety.
- G. Incorporate a community kitchen and green space to support sustainability and social connection.
- H. Move to new facility by 2030.

Actions 2026-2030

Planning, design and development for the new library must begin immediately, in preparation for a facility that will meet the community's needs.

This includes:

- **Fundraising Campaign:** The Library will begin a fundraising campaign to raise roughly \$1,500,000 in order to purchase new furniture, move the SuperNet, and enhance services (\$50 per square foot).
- **Community Advocacy:** The library will begin an advocacy campaign with town council and other community stakeholders to position this project as a priority within the community.
- **Location Analysis:** to consider the needs of current and future patrons. Easy access, parking and mobility specifications need to be factored into site selection.

2023 Facility Assessment

For the current and anticipated population, Sylvan Lake Municipal Library should be housed in an approximately **40,000 sq ft facility**, according to Municipal Affairs Public Library Services Branch standards. The current library is **7,152 sq ft.**

It should house **35,189 items**, compared to the **existing 24,147 items** (2024).



- **Purpose-built Facility Design:** Create a larger library that supports expanded programming, collections, and services, meeting the Municipal Affairs Public Library Services Branch standards for space and number of items per capita.
- **Sustainability:** Integrate Net Zero design principles to reduce environmental impact and ensure long-term cost savings.
- **Space Planning and Allocation:** work with a library specialist/consultant to inform and guide the design, layout, and functionality of the new facility.
- **Interior Design Requirements:** such as sensory considerations, light/UV effects on collections and enhanced patron comfort.
- **Develop Dedicated Zones:** Create quiet zones, sensory-friendly areas, and bookable private spaces for study or small group meetings.
- **Add Comfort and Community Areas:** Establish cozy reading corners, a children’s play and reading space, and a community café.
- **Enable Universal Accessibility:** Provide barrier-free washrooms, accessible technology, and home delivery services.
- **Incorporate Special Features:** Include a community kitchen and outdoor green space to support sustainability initiatives and foster social interaction.
- **Purchase and Update Furniture:** Acquire modern, flexible, and durable furniture to create inviting and adaptable spaces.
- **Support Staff and Operations:** Create adequate workspaces and secure on-site storage to enhance service delivery and safety.
- **Complete the Move:** Transition into the new facility by 2030.



Top Public Priorities

- Comfortable reading area
- Children’s play/reading area
- Café
- Sensory-friendly areas
- Home delivery



5. Maintain Good Governance and Operational Excellence

Objective: to ensure professional standards and operational activities deliver high-quality, reliable and responsible library services to the people of Sylvan Lake.

Key Activities:

- A. Manage resources and budget with fiscal prudence and effective oversight.
- B. Cultivate a strong corporate culture that reflects mutual respect and trust.
- C. Uphold all Occupational Health & Safety and Labour Relations requirements.
- D. Support Board development with learning opportunities and dialogue.
- E. Maintain up-to-date policies and procedures to guide operations.

Actions 2026-2030

- **Manage Resources and Budget With Fiscal Prudence And Effective Oversight:** Deliver on regular financial reporting cycles with detailed variance analysis, and conduct quarterly budget reviews with senior staff to ensure spending aligns with strategic priorities and organizational capacity.
- **Deliver Quarterly Financial Reports to the Library Board.**
- **Cultivate a Strong Corporate Culture that Reflects Mutual Respect and Trust:** Create regular team-building initiatives and implement transparent communication channels between all levels of staff. Support psychological safety in the workplace with a 'no-risk' system to hear complaints and issues, and respond in a timely fashion.
- **Uphold all Occupational Health & Safety and Labour Relations Requirements:** Conduct regular workplace inspections and risk assessments and maintain current knowledge of employment legislation. Provide staff training as appropriate.
- **Support Board Development with Learning Opportunities and Dialogue:** Facilitate a strategic planning session to encourage diverse perspectives. Develop and deliver a robust onboarding program for new board members, and create mentorship opportunities that pair experienced and new members.



- **Maintain Up-to-date Policies and Procedures to Guide Operations:** Institute annual policy reviews with stakeholder input (staff, board or public, as appropriate), maintain a centralized document, with version control, and create a regular communication schedule to ensure all staff are informed of policy updates and changes.

Conclusion and Letter of Thanks

As we look ahead to the next five years, the Sylvan Lake Municipal Library reaffirms its commitment to serving our growing and diverse community with innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. This Plan of Service reflects the voices of our residents, the dedication of our staff, and the vision of our leadership. It is both a roadmap and a promise—to empower lifelong learning, expand access to resources, strengthen community partnerships, and build a future-ready facility that meets the evolving needs of Sylvan Lake.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the residents of Sylvan Lake for their enthusiastic participation in our engagement process and for sharing their ideas, priorities, and aspirations. Your input has shaped every aspect of this plan and continues to inspire our work.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Town Council for their ongoing support and advocacy for the library. Your commitment to public service and community development has been instrumental in helping us grow and adapt to meet the needs of our town.

Together, we are building a library that reflects the heart of Sylvan Lake—a place of learning, connection, and opportunity for all.

With appreciation,

Haley Amendt
Director, Sylvan Lake Municipal Library

