



## Recreation & Community Services Staff Report

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Report Title: Breslau Community Centre Library  
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Reviewed By: Marie Malcolm, Acting Manager of Recreation  
Final Review: Senior Management Team

### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report R08-2023 respecting Breslau Community Centre Library receive this report for information purposes.

### Background:

#### Library Services

The Townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, Wellesley, and North Dumfries operate library services in partnership with the Region of Waterloo (ROW), Cultural Services department. The Townships are responsible for ownership and provision of the library facilities, as well as capital expenditures and some maintenance items. The ROW manages service delivery and all maintenance that impacts service delivery areas (furniture, interior finishes, etc.). Regarding oversight, a Library Committee exists that consists of the four Township Mayors of the rural municipalities who report to Regional Council, which serves as the Library Board. The Committee makes recommendations on policy creation, administrative organization, delivery of library services to rural residents, and operating budgets for the 10 branch libraries.

Four library branches exist within the Township of Woolwich, in Elmira, St. Jacobs, Bloomingdale, and Breslau. The first two are permanent standalone facilities, whereas the Bloomingdale branch operates out of a church, and the Breslau site is currently a pop-up location at the Breslau Community Centre (BCC). The Bloomingdale branch is a unique exception throughout the region to the model employed at the other branches,

with the ROW indirectly leasing the space through the Township. The current two-year lease for the Bloomingdale branch expires at the end of 2024.

### **Breslau Branch**

Library services began in Breslau in 2011, offering of a variety of story time programs for families at the BCC. In 2019, library service was expanded to include a small collection of on-site library items available for check-out during scheduled pop-up library hours, and in 2022 a permanent book return was added. With these additions, membership and use of this library satellite location has grown steadily over the years.

The Breslau library branch currently operates as a pop-up library on Tuesdays from 4:30pm to 7:30pm in the Empire Room (main level).

### **Comments:**

#### **Library Services Expansion**

The Township of Woolwich and ROW are working towards a vision to expand library services in the community of Breslau, through use of the lower level of the BCC. The proposed branch location has been identified as an ideal interim option to determine community interest and use. It offers a convenient and familiar location, unique opportunities for programming experiences that complement the community centre's current recreation programs, and it meets important facility requirements (AODA, etc.).

Use of the Empire Room for permanent library services is unfortunately not an option due to building structural limitations, and the need of the space for regular programming.

#### **Public Engagement**

The Township of Woolwich and the ROW undertook a series of community engagement processes to determine public interest in the introduction of a full-service library branch in the lower level. Over 90% of the survey respondents are in favour of expanding library services to include a branch in the proposed BCC location. Overall, public support was positive for the use of the lower level as an interim library service location, with the future possibility of a purpose-built, dedicated library facility. However, some residents expressed concerns about limited accessibility and a preference for above ground amenities. The facility does house a limited use limited application elevator which was installed in 2016. The lift is a hybrid between a commercial elevator and wheelchair lift.

#### **Population and Usage Indicators**

Steadily increasing population, membership, and use of the Breslau library indicates that the services in Breslau should be similar to that of other similarly sized communities, such as Baden in the Township of Wilmot (See Appendix A). With the current level of engagement, and projected population growth, the Breslau community would benefit from

a permanent browsing collection and more regular library service, which a full-service library branch would provide.

The Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario, recommend the provision of a medium library branch for catchment areas of 5,000-10,000 population. Ideally, a medium-sized library branch has a footprint of 5,000 to 10,000 square feet, is open 25 to 45 hours per week, contain 12,000 to 24,000 books and five to six computer stations. Provided the proposed Breslau expansion does not meet all standards, it offers a significant enhancement over the current library offering, and a next step in the provision of a new facility. The ROW is planning for a total of 16 hours in the 2,700 square foot space in 2024.

### **Timelines**

ROW Staff plan to take a recommendation for approval of the addition of a full-service library branch in the lower level of the BCC to the Library Committee on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Pending approval by Library Committee, renovation of the lower level of the BCC will begin immediately, with a projected completion date of Dec. 31, 2023, and an opening date to the public on Feb. 14, 2024. The ROW will continue to offer satellite library service at the BCC until the renovation is complete.

The ROW will be responsible for all renovations to transform the lower level into a library space. Following completion of the Township's accessibility audit in 2023, the department will plan for related upgrades to be undertaken in 2024.

### **Interdepartmental Impacts:**

None.

### **Financial Impacts:**

The BCC lower level is currently not being utilized for programming, and hence, there will be no impact to facility revenues. Additionally, pending approval of the in-progress updated maintenance agreement between the Townships and ROW, the ROW will be responsible for utility usage.

With completion of the future Breslau splashpad, Staff intend to propose additional customer service hours at the facility through 2024 budget deliberations. Currently staffing at the BCC is limited to 20 hours per week, whereas an enhancement would be seen primarily through the summer months. The library will not be a driver of the enhanced hours, however, would benefit from additional customer service.

## **Strategic Plan Impacts:**

**Optimize the Use of Municipal Infrastructure:** Manage and maintain all municipal infrastructure with an emphasis on continuous improvement and greater efficiencies.

**Ensure Managed and Sustainable Community Growth and Development:** Balance the small town feel, maintenance of rural values and lifestyle with provision of urban amenities and infrastructure.

**Expand Financial Sustainability / Best Practices:** Explore collaboration and partnership opportunities that make fiscal sense and ensure best value.

## **Conclusion:**

That Council receive Report R08-2023 respecting Breslau Community Centre Library Branch for information purposes.

## **Attachments:**

Appendix A: Comparison of Breslau and Baden

Appendix B: Breslau Library Engagement Results

Appendix C: Library Renderings

## Appendix A: Comparison of Breslau and Baden

Statistics	Current Population	Total Library Members	New Members 2022
Breslau	5,053	122	47
Baden	5,178	1,455	117

## Appendix B: Breslau Library Engagement Results

### Online Survey Responses - Overview:

- 66 online survey responses
- Nearly 90% of survey respondents had visited the Breslau Community Centre in the last 12 months
- When asked for 3 words to describe the Breslau Community Centre, the top answers included:
  - Welcoming
  - Clean
  - Community
  - Quiet
  - Spacious/open/big
- When asked how often they visited the library, the majority of respondents answers weekly (approx. 30%), seasonally (approx. 25%) and monthly (approx. 14%)
- When asked if there was anything that prevents or discourages you from visiting the Breslau Community Centre, respondents top answers included:
  - Nothing discourages me
  - Limited recreational activities
- Over 65% respondents were familiar with the current pop-up library program offered at the Breslau Satellite Branch, with nearly 40% of respondents having used the library service in the past 12 months.
- Over 75% of survey respondents have visited a library in the last 12 months
- The majority of respondents visit a KPL location most frequently, and nearly 40% of respondents visiting the Breslau Satellite pop-up location – and the majority of respondents visit these locations monthly or weekly.
- When asked what day and time survey participants preferred to visit their preferred library branch, the majority of responses included weekday evenings and weekend mornings.
- When asked if there is anything that prevents or discourages them from visiting their local library, the top answers included:
  - Limited hours of operation
  - Distance of the closest branch location
- 90% of survey respondents are in favour of expanding library services to include a branch in the proposed Breslau Community Centre location, with 4 people requesting additional information (i.e. information sessions)
- When asked what resources, tools, events or programs they would love to see offered at a new library branch in Breslau (in addition to books), the top answers included:
  - Kids programming and resources
  - Events and activities
  - 3D printing and other technology resources
- When asked to describe a future Breslau Library Branch and community space where everyone belongs, the remarks included:
  - Visiting after school and on weekends
  - Events and programs happening

- Spacious, clean and welcoming space that encourages people to stay
- Homework space, quiet and relaxing space
- Feel safe and welcomed
- Many resources available
- Bright space with different areas for different use

*Imagine that we have transformed the Breslau Library Branch into a successful community space where everyone belongs. It's your first visit since these changes were made. Describe your visit experience. When are you visiting? What do you see or hear? How do you feel there? Who is there? What are you and others doing?*

### **Quotes:**

"Week nights or weekends, it's quiet but busy with families, seniors, and everyone from the community, it is a feeling of welcoming and there is space for you to read and spend time there, looking for books, reading, children's programs, youth programs/ computer use."

"[I am visiting] 2-3 times a week with my family to attend an event and have a nice fun interesting space to read and explore. We would also attending programming. We feel safe and inspired and connected to the community."

"Visiting after school with other community members, programs happening. Bright and welcoming space that encourages people to stay - homework space, relax space. Feel safe and welcomed."

- 5 survey respondents expressed some concern about the library being in a lower-level of a building (note that some visitors during the information sessions explained that they had completed the online survey prior to visiting the space and had "changed their mind" and were in favour of using the lower-level space)
- Nearly 80% of respondents were a parent, guardian or caregiver to a child under the age of 18
- The majority of respondents were 30-50 years old.
- Nearly every survey participant lives in Breslau

### **Information session feedback**

#### **High level summary**

- Information sessions were held at the proposed space at the Breslau Community Centre. The sessions included a casual drop-in format, with 1 on 1 or small group discussion opportunities to ask questions about the proposed location. Artist renderings of the proposed space were projected in the room, with printed boards placed at each room. Printed surveys were available for completion.
- Information session dates included:
  - Tuesday June 20th, 4-8pm
  - Thursday June 22nd, 9am-3pm
  - Thursday, June 29 (at the request of the BCC Seniors Coffee Club)
- Approximately 50 visitors across 3 information sessions held on June 20

- Ages of visitors ranged from older teen/young adults, seniors and young families.
- Comments were overall very positive, with few concerns expressed about being in the lower level.
- Some visitors expressed that the space would make a good, interim solution.
- Visitors expressed that prior to visiting the space and experiencing the visualizations of space potential, they were either ambivalent or slightly unsure about the suitability of lower-level use. After visiting the space, and viewing the artist concepts of how the space could be used, reaction tended to shift toward very positive with regards to lower-level use for library services.
- Many visitors expressed the need, and excitement, for children's programming, resources and spaces within the proposed library branch.
- As a new engagement platform in the township, some visitors expressed frustration with the initial sign up process on EngageWR.ca



## Appendix C: Library Renderings

