



Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to present the [Guelph Public Library's operating budget for 2025](#) and provide an updated forecast for the 2026-2028 operating years. This budget underscores our continued commitment to delivering exceptional library services, building capacity in preparation for the new Central Library, and aligning with the City's "Future Ready" Strategic Plan for 2024-2028.

Libraries are the great community equalizer. This budget reflects our commitment to maintaining approved levels of service, ensuring residents continue to receive equitable access to quality services and programs they need regardless of what they can afford. In this space, we make a difference by meeting people where they are, particularly made-vulnerable community members.

The requested 2025 operating budget totals \$12,349,767, reflecting a 6.5 per cent reduction from the 2024 budget. This reduction is a result of an administrative adjustment of \$1,634,000 in debt funding moving from the Guelph Public Library budget to the City budget. This realignment does not increase the total Guelph tax levy. Additionally, all new Library Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions in the 2025 budget and 2026-2028 forecast will be phased in at 50 per cent. Finally, funding for the contract Project Manager (PM) position has been removed from the 2025 budget. Increased costs are primarily driven by our efforts to build capacity in preparation for the new Central Library, rising personnel expenditures due to staff expansion, and inflationary pressures. Additionally, rental increases at the Bullfrog Mall and East Side branches, along with rising costs for books and materials, have added to the financial demands. City-imposed charges for the West End Branch, Bookmobile, and library-wide insurance have also increased by 5.4 per cent.

A key driver in this budget is the adjustment to employee compensation, which reflects anticipated changes in the new collective agreement and necessary cost-of-living increases. These adjustments are essential to ensure competitive wages, promote staff retention, and maintain operational stability. Coupled with rising rental and materials costs, and higher City-imposed charges on branches and mobile services, these factors further contribute to the budgetary pressures.

Our staff are a large part of the work that we do. 25 years ago, you might have met a librarian at our front desk to ask for help finding a book. Today, that same librarian is also connecting made-vulnerable members of our community to much-needed services, facilitating access to technology to help get a job, earn a diploma or degree, or learn a new language.

Those librarians are now surrounded by a diverse set of colleagues. Some are trained Early Childhood Educators who deliver programming that inspires a love of early literacy and learning. Others facilitate safe spaces via clubs for teens to meet their peers and share their experiences. Some offer adults a space to connect with and find their communities, sometimes at vulnerable parts of their lives.

As we prepare for the 2026 opening of the new Central Library, the Library Board has approved an addition of 6.3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions that will increase our capacity for services and programs like these, totaling \$526,165. As the main library prepares to triple in size, gradually phasing in these positions will be critical to helping us move us into the next stage of this project which is animating the new space with programs and services that are critical to expanded service delivery from day one. In addition to expanding staff capacity, we will prioritize ongoing staff training and professional development to ensure our team is fully equipped to manage enhanced programming and integration of new technologies that will support the community's new and emerging needs.



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The 2026-2028 operating budget forecast has been updated to align with the operational needs of the new Central Library, which includes funding for program staff, building maintenance, and utilities. This forecast is in line with the findings of the Baker District Operating Budget Impacts Report, presented to City Council in October 2023. The report outlines the anticipated net additional cost to operate the new library, which will total just under \$2.3 million. This amount will cover essential services such as program staff, building maintenance, security, and utilities, ensuring the new facility keeps pace with the growing needs of our community.

The library plays a vital role in supporting the well-being of Guelph's residents, providing a welcoming and inclusive space for learning, connection, and personal growth. Many of the challenges our municipality faces right now are being helped through programs and services at the Library, which foster lifelong learning, improve access to information, and promote social inclusion. By ensuring that the new Central Library has the necessary resources, we are further enhancing its ability to be a community hub that supports mental and social well-being, economic development, and cultural engagement.

We are also presenting a three-year operating budget forecast, with the majority of the projected increases driven by the operational needs of the new Central Library. The 2026 and 2027 budgets will continue to reflect the 2023 Library Board motion IC.9.23, which directed staff to implement a phased hiring plan as part of the multi-year budget process. This phased approach will ensure that we can meet the demands of the new library while being fiscally responsible.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting the strategic goals of the City of Guelph, ensuring that library services are accessible, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of our diverse community. The new Central Library will not only serve as a physical space but also as a catalyst for social and cultural enrichment, contributing to the overall well-being of the city. We appreciate your consideration of our budget request and look forward to continuing our partnership in delivering exceptional library services that benefit all residents of Guelph.

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