

AANIIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Designing a Library that Welcomes and Inspires Newcomers

Library as Place Conference, Ottawa 07.10.2019



1 / INTRODUCTION

SPEAKERS

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Aaniin is an Ojibwe word that can be translated in several ways
- “welcome”, “hello” and “I see your light.”



1 / INTRODUCTION

What it looked like when we started

There is no THERE, there.

Building a greenfield community for newcomers through investment in 'library as place'



Overview of community

Intentional thinking about planning a library can weave together a community fabric composed of many different coloured threads of background – where no community existed before.



Demographics

Top languages spoken at home:

English 36.8%, Cantonese
13.6%, Tamil 9.8%

No knowledge of English or
French 15%

Visible Minority Presence:
95.6%, 41.4% Chinese, 40%
South Asian

A high level of multiple-family
households:
15.4% compared to 7.8% for the
City as a whole

A Community of Immigrants:
66.9% identify as Immigrants

Average Household Income:
\$105,229 vs. \$126,219 for the
City as a whole

No Red Flags....Yet!



THE UNKNOWN UNKNOWN

Going Deeper



A ticket to a new community

- The role of the library in establishing a community of newcomers
- The library is addressing immigrant settlement- they are an important hub within the community
- Getting a library card is an important first step into a new community



OUR GOALS

**HOW CAN WE MAKE THE LIBRARY
TRULY RESPONSIVE TO THE
COMMUNITY NEEDS?**

2 / OUR GOALS

It's about hope and prosperity

- Aaniin spaces, programs, and services were designed to comprehensively meet community needs for:
 - all ages,
 - diverse community,
 - types of learners, &
 - types of library users.
- Providing opportunities to build a good future and provide pathways to stability and security.
- Developing partnerships with diverse community groups to promote social wellness and employment.



A Place to STEAM



A Place for Community Partnerships

- Engaging a diverse community requires developing partnerships with diverse organizations.
- Partnerships that:
 - Provide learning opportunities beyond the library's areas of expertise.
 - Engage non-English speaking groups so that we may connect them to our multi-lingual resources
 - Celebrate our multicultural community (ie. Coffee & Vaadai)



It's about truly addressing needs

- A business hub to support entrepreneurship
- Career & skill building workshops
- Collaborations with the York Region School Board to offer STEAM certifications
- Programs for the ESL community
- Reading support in collaboration with Youth Parents Association of Markham
- Connecting newcomers to service providers in health, wellness and recreation



THE COMMUNITY

**WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT
THIS COMMUNITY?**

Implications - What does this mean?

- United Way reports re rates of working poverty, economic challenges of newcomers in the suburbs
 - Impact on housing situations
 - Adapting the Suburban Home Built Form: Low density neighbourhoods made up of detached homes built for single families, adapted to the need of multiple-family households
 - Increased pressure on community facilities



Lifestyles in newcomers suburbs

- Finding the support and social networks of their communities of origin
- Vibrant cultural events
- Seeking upward mobility

Social Values

- Traditional Family
- Attraction for Crowds



The Challenges

- Moving to a new country involves many changes and social transitions
- Successful social integration depends on:
 - Family and friendship ties – a local personal network
 - Social participation and community involvement
 - A sense of belonging to where they live – to their local community, their city, their province, and to Canada



The Challenges

- Risks associated with high levels of income inequality – the potential for undesirable social and economic outcomes, including:
 - Lower levels of educational performance, mental and physical health.
 - A decreasing sense of social inclusion, and a decreasing feeling of a common stake with others



OUR APPROACH

**HOW CAN WE GAIN A
BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THIS COMMUNITY?**

Peeling back the layers in understanding the essential role of this library



Creating a vital piece of social infrastructure that builds community cohesion, well-being + resilience

4 / COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Bringing the community needs into focus

Census demographic data

- Multiple family households
- 58% immigrant population
- South/ southeast Asian
- Lower average individual incomes



Anecdotal information

- The human dimension
- Nuancing the program + shaping the design




Creating an inclusive and broad reaching engagement process

- Addressing language barriers
- Challenges of engaging community of newcomers
- Meeting where people are most comfortable
- Engage leaders within the community
- Engage agency groups

PRE-DESIGN COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETINGS

You are Invited to Share Your Ideas on a NEW Community Centre, Library and Park in South East Markham




Markham's Integrated Leisure Master Plan identified the need for another community centre and public library in the south east quadrant of Markham. Pre-planning is now underway to develop a site south and east of the Karachi Drive extension, and south of Kirkham Drive. The development site will also include a new community park which will be integrated with the community centre and library.

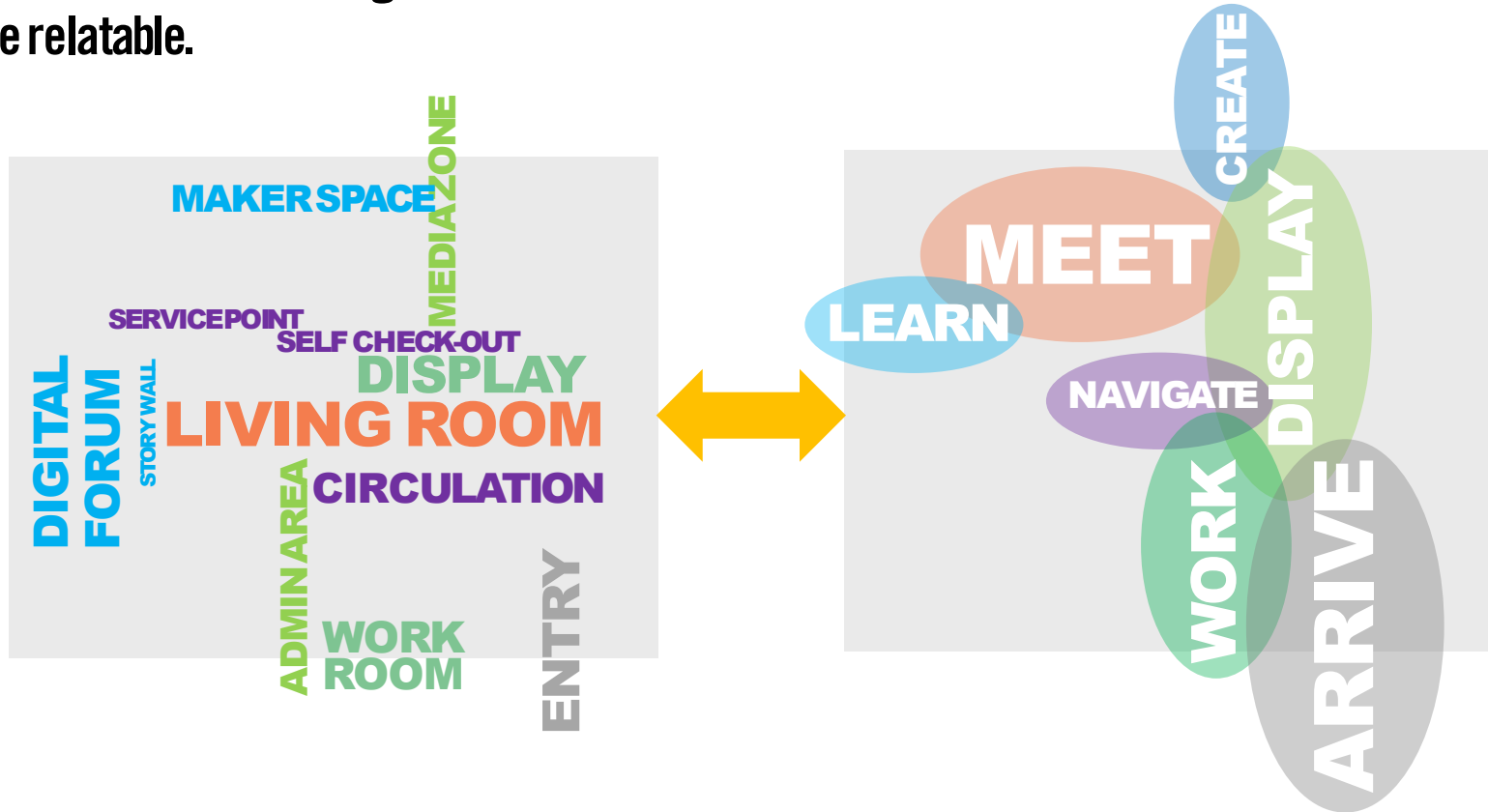
We want to hear from you.
So come out to one of these meetings and tell us what you would like to see inside and around this centre featuring activity space, a library and an outdoor park.

Wednesday, October 26	Parkland Public School – Library	7 – 9 p.m.
Thursday, November 10	Armada Community Centre	7 – 9 p.m.
Monday, November 14	Armada Community Centre	7 – 9 p.m.

Markham staff will be on hand to hear your ideas and help lead the discussion.



From noun to verb- Making the conversation more relatable.



Empowering the community

STREETSCAPE	LANEWAY	ENTRANCE	VERTICAL CIRCULATION	HORIZONTAL CIRCULATION	PUBLIC ROOM	FOOD SERVICE
WHY? TREES SEATING COLOR FURNITURE ACTIVITY SCALE	WHY? MIXED USE COLOR WALLS TREES	WHY? DEATH YEAR (CONNECTIONS) INTER (CONNECTIONS) LIGHT	WHY? COMMUNITY SHARED SPACE	WHY? LIGHT VIEW SEMI SPACE CONNECTIVITY ENERGY	WHY? EVENT SPACE INTERACTIVE SPACE COLOR SCALE FLOW	WHY? TREES CHOICE COMMUNITY INTERACTIVE DESIGN

SESSION 2: EXPERIENCE

Focusing on qualitative characteristics, choose the photo that best represents the experience your group imagines for each of the categories above. Note key themes or ideas in the box below.



Asking the right questions

What experience or feature from other community centers or building types would you like to see at this facility?

- Some have witnessed the value in a centre that **makes seniors feel welcome** to all activities.
- **Innovative teen and youth spaces** that relate to other programs such as library – play based learning.

How do you envision this building?

- As **a multigenerational family destination**
- Welcome to all seniors
- Reflective of the cultures in South East Markham

How can this project make a new kind of place for the community?

- **Showcase culture** through food performance and arts
- Respond to different levels of culture
- **Welcome and address diversity** in programs
- Respond to diversity through selection of library materials
- Respond to different levels of comfort and modesty amongst users

Interactive tools and approaches to design

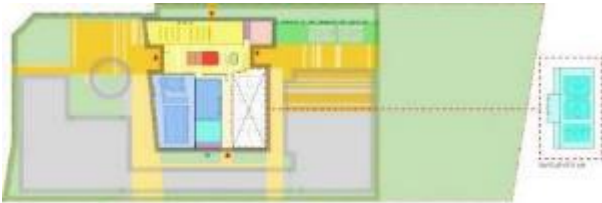
Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



Creating a Sense of Hope

WHAT WILL THIS
LIBRARY MEAN TO YOU?



Creating a Sense of Hope

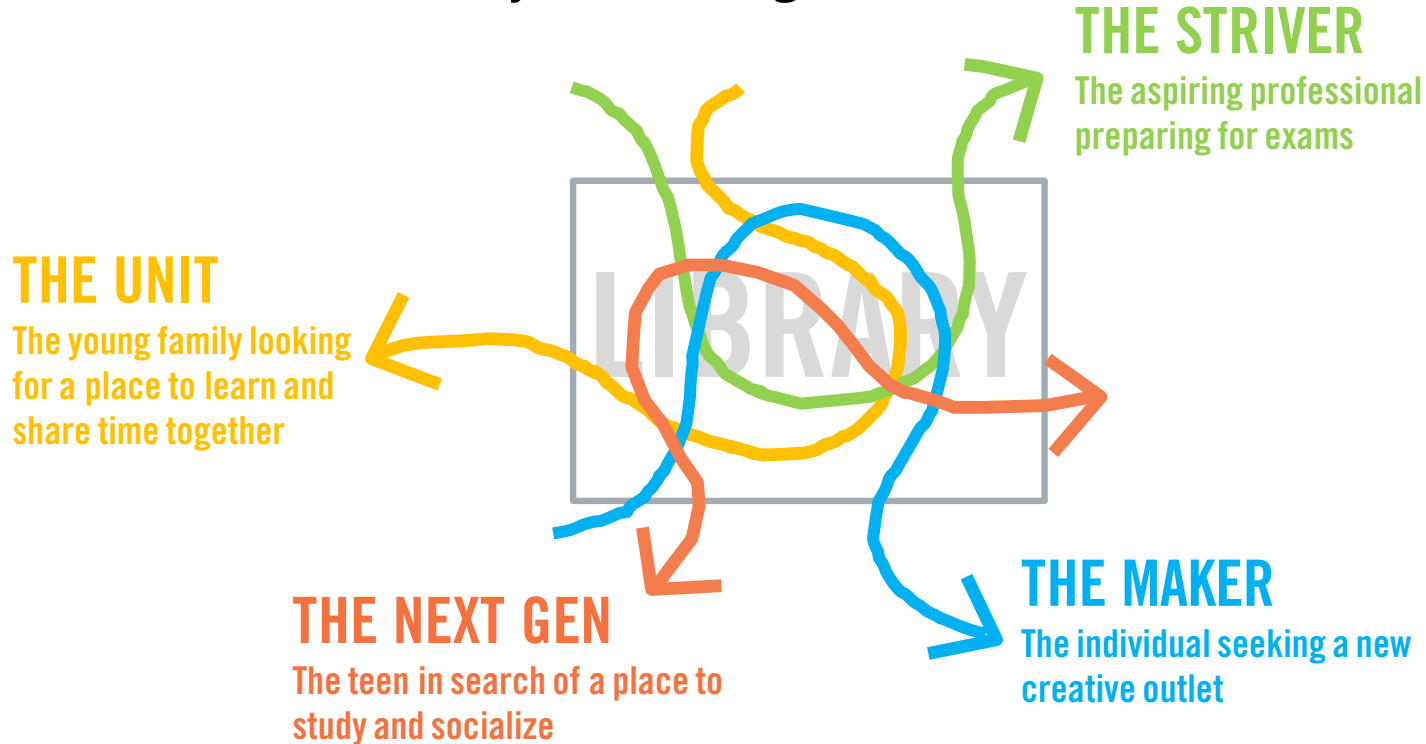
**IT WILL BE A HOME AWAY FROM HOME
FOR MY FAMILY- IT NEEDS TO BE
WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE**



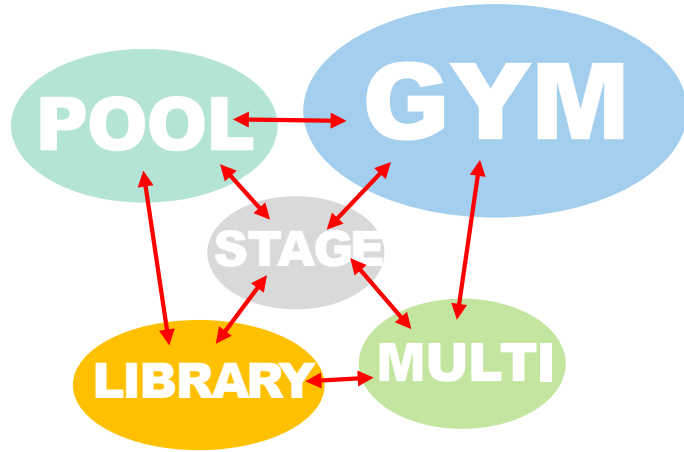
THE CONCEPT

**HOW DO WE DESIGN FOR DIVERSE
COMMUNITY NEEDS?**

The library is a narrative ...where different users and storylines weave together



The community hub—magnifying connections

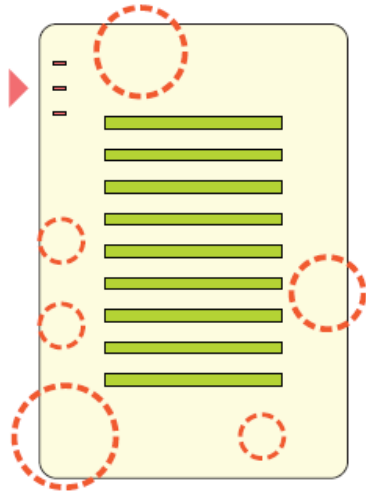


Ground floor

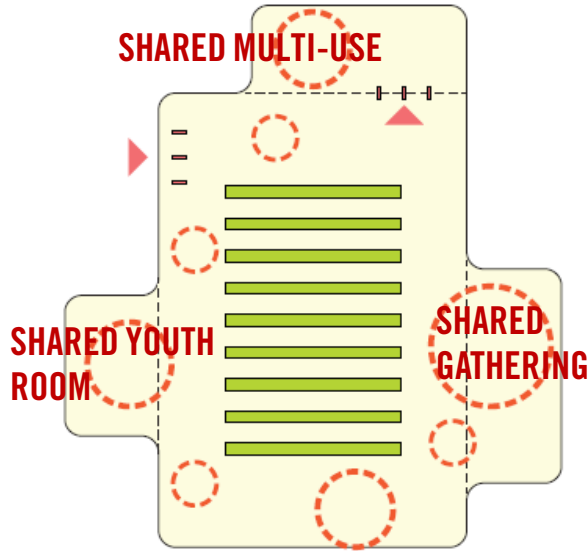


Second floor

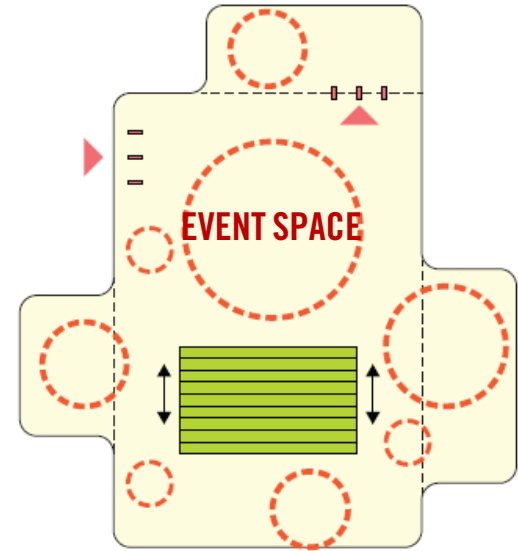
A Library that Feels and Functions Bigger than it is.



Library space—20,000sf



Library space—20,000sf
Shared space—8,000sf



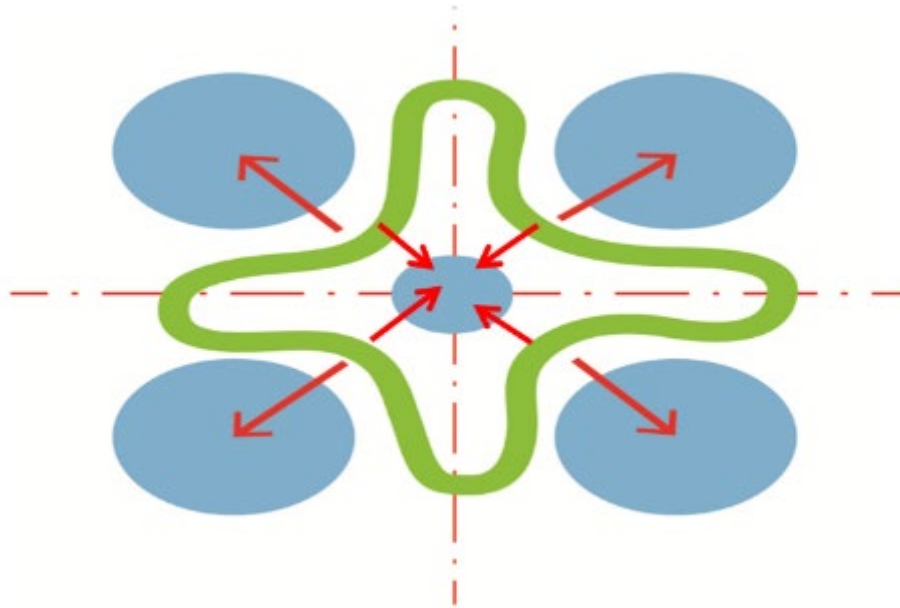
Change book/ people space ratio

5 / CONCEPT

**Taking programs out of the box
...through people focused design.**



Magnifying opportunities for viewing and social gathering



Creating a radical sense of transparency



It's not about walls, it's about connections



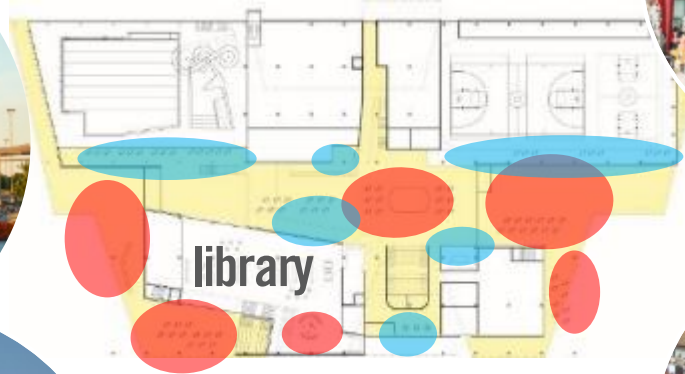
The roof ties everything together



Designing the spaces 'in between'.



ART PLAZA



library



MARKET PLACE



COMMUNITY KITCHEN



READING TERRACE



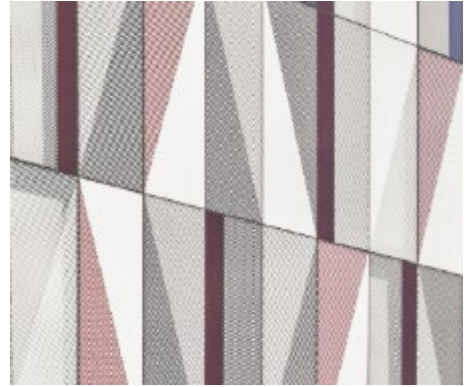
EVENT SPACE

that speak to the diverse character of this community

Expanding the conversation around inclusivity



A visual expression of diversity



5 / CONCEPT

A focus on comfort - from 1 to 500



Future proofing



A focus on sustainability

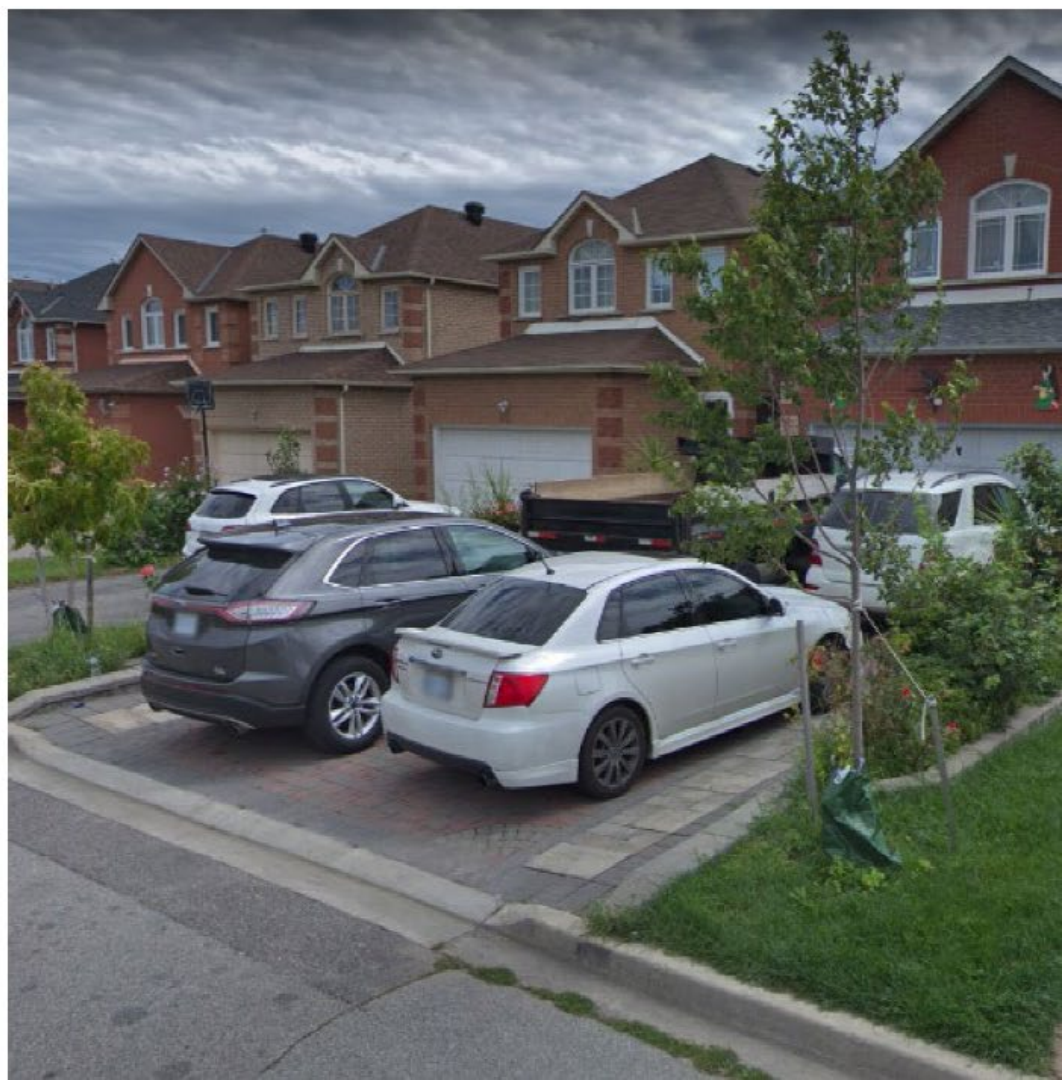


THE PLACE

**HOW CAN WE CREATE
A MEANINGFUL
SENSE OF PLACE?**

Looks are deceiving

- More research emerged re: changing settlement patterns of immigrants.
 - Rather than settling in urban neighbourhoods near downtown cores, newcomers now tend to settle in the suburbs – why?
 - Suburban communities with a different look and feel to traditional suburbs; may look the same on the surface, but function quite differently
 - The context revealed a hidden population density



6 / PLACE

An evolving context

A fragmented suburban context



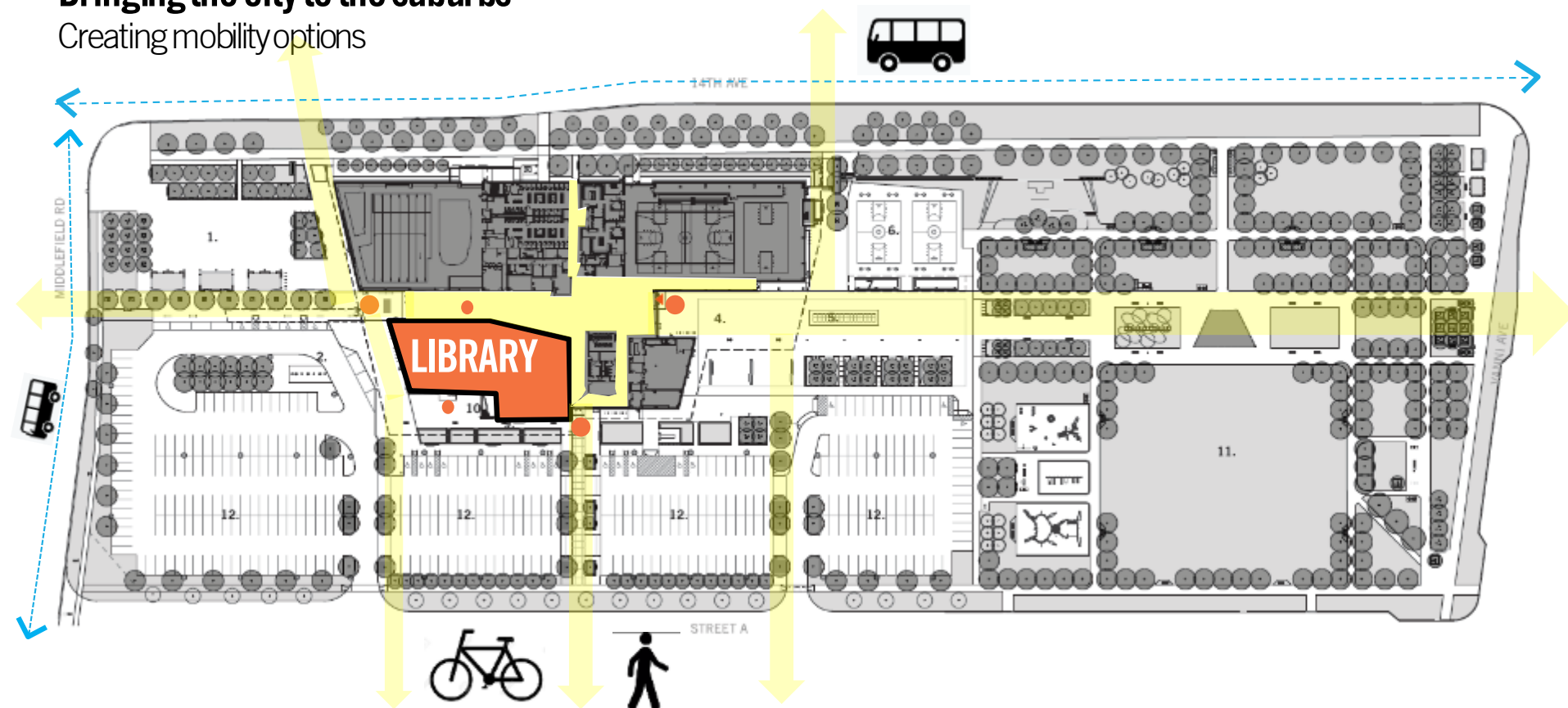
Thinking in bold ways about city building

- A new landmark
- A catalyst for a more urban pattern of development



Bringing the city to the suburbs

Creating mobility options

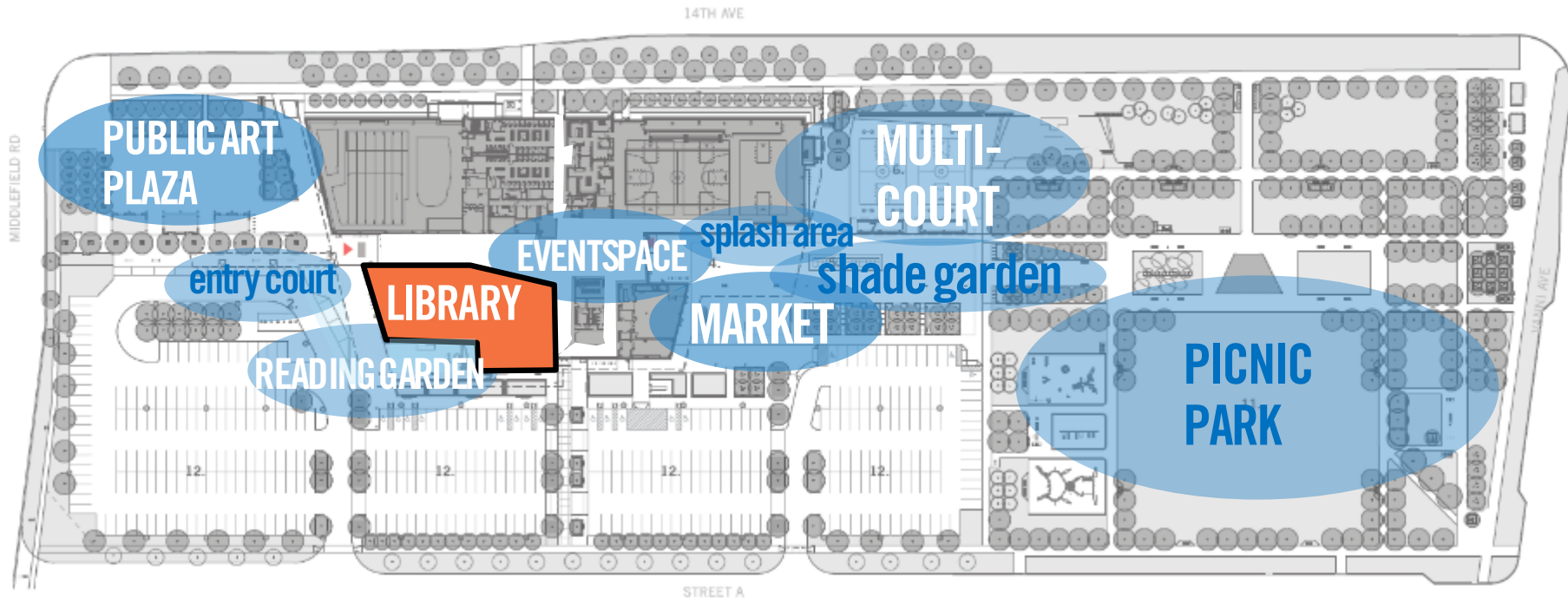


Bringing the city to the suburbs

A detailed site plan of a neighbourhood. The plan shows various buildings, parking lots, and streets. A large orange arrow points from the bottom left towards a building labeled 'LIBRARY'. The arrow is labeled 'NEIGHBOURHOOD' at its base. The plan includes labels for 'MIDDLEFIELD RD' on the left, '14TH AVE' at the top, and 'STREET A' at the bottom. Various numbered areas (1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12) are marked throughout the plan.

Bringing the city to the suburbs

A series of interconnected outdoor rooms



Bringing the city to the suburbs

The details matter- designing for diversity



Public art
Play features



Varied seating
Shade + definition



Lighting + security
Cultural gathering spaces



Design for multi-generational
use

"People tend to congregate in ways that are reminiscent of their home country. They are writing their cultural stories on the cityscape."

PROGRAM RESPONSE

HOW THE STORYLINES ARE UNFOLDING

the 'Unit'

WE NEED A PLACE WHERE WE
CAN ALL BE TOGETHER AS A
FAMILY AND PLAY + LEARN



Our response/the 'Worm'



Our response / 'The Work' - Family programs



The 'Young Explorer'

I LIKE TO EXPLORE
THROUGH STORIES



Our Response / The 'Pit'



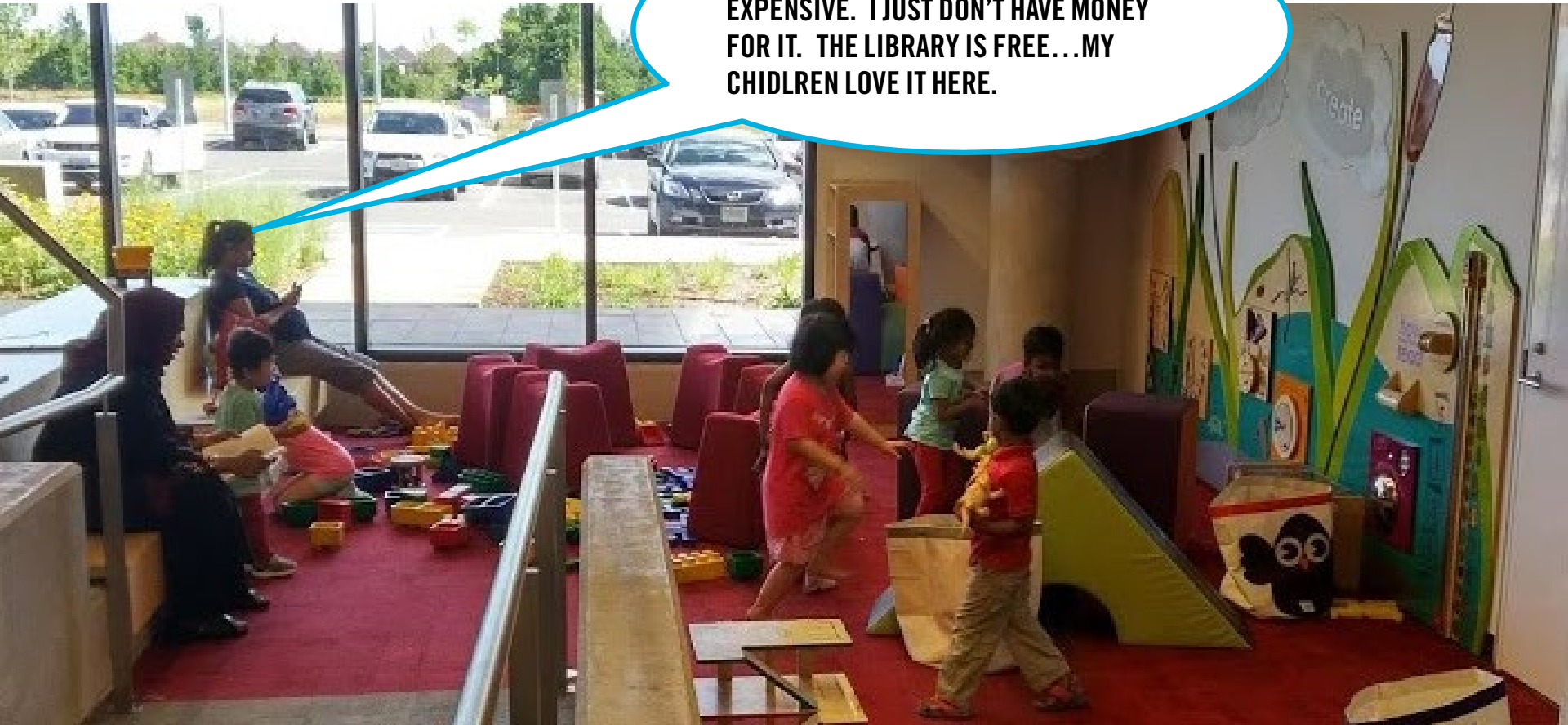
Our Response/The 'Pit'



THERE ARE LOTS OF TOYS
AND GAMES HERE- SOME
OF THEM I CAN TAKE HOME

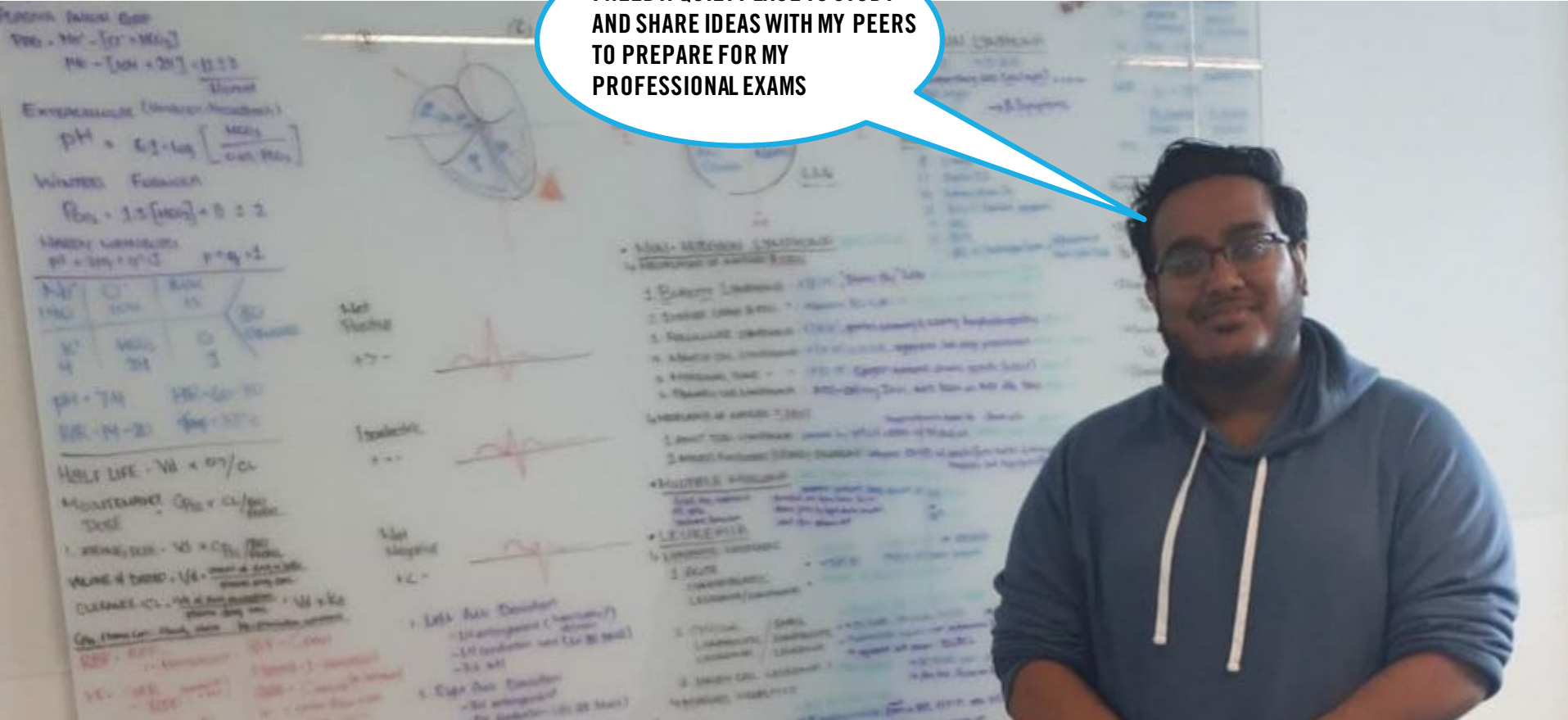
Our Response / 'The Pit'

THE LOCAL INDOOR PLAYGROUND IS TOO EXPENSIVE. I JUST DON'T HAVE MONEY FOR IT. THE LIBRARY IS FREE...MY CHILDREN LOVE IT HERE.



'The Striver'

I NEED A QUIET PLACE TO STUDY
AND SHARE IDEAS WITH MY PEERS
TO PREPARE FOR MY
PROFESSIONAL EXAMS



Our Response / Collaborative study spaces



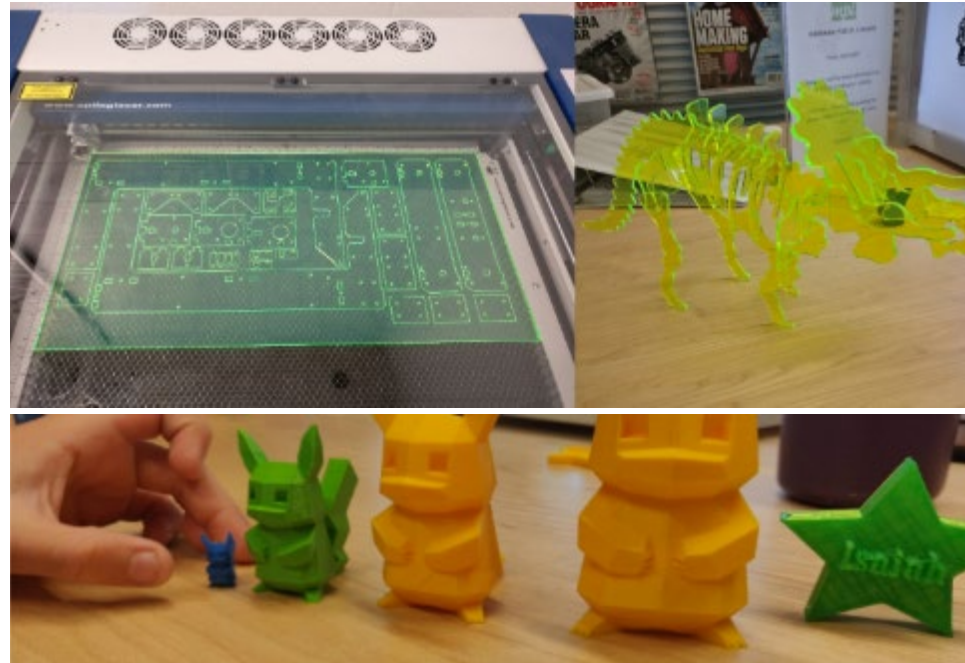
The 'Maker'

I NEED ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY SO I
CAN TINKER AND CREATE



Our Response / Full STEAM ahead!

- + Maker Space
- + Creation Studio
- + Digital Media Lab
- + Business Hub



Our Response / Full STEAM ahead!



The 'Curious'

THE LIBRARY SHOULD
REPRESENT EVERYONE IN
THE COMMUNITY.



Our Response / Multi-cultural events and programs



The 'Next Gen'



Our Response/The 'Drop'



THE OUTCOME

**HOW HAS THE LIBRARY
BEEN RECEIVED BY THE
COMMUNITY?**

What we've learned since opening

- The numbers
- Outcomes
- Issues
- Unintended consequences
- New community challenges



Year 1- the numbers

- 523,820 customer visits
- Over 10,000 visits per week
- Annually: 26 visits per square foot – system average is 16.8 visits per square foot
- Our busiest and most intensively used branch



Creations that reflect our diversity



The Feedback—The positives

“Facility is very clean and welcoming. I love all the natural light that comes in from the huge windows.”

“I love how the rooms are assorted neatly with comfy chairs for students to collaborate. I also enjoy the architecture of this library.”

“The silent study spaces have been a life saver”

“Very spacious and bright - love the amount of natural light that comes into the library.”

“The armchairs scattered throughout the upper level of the library are cozy and comfortable, and there is a nice amount of sunlight coming through the windows.”

The Feedback—room for improvement

“The building is too good. Municipal government should save money from smaller building and less library. ”

“Not always enough space for families with young children”

“The seating area (for studying) is quite small and tends to fill up very quickly. This is extremely disappointing, since this facility is in the vicinity of two high schools, which means that it is always packed with noisy and rowdy high-school students. Ideally, there should be more seating areas for other visiting members of the public . ”

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU!