

# Southeast Community Innovation Center — Key Messages

Draft

## Overview

On October 16, 2023, Poudre Libraries, along with the City of Fort Collins and Poudre School District (PSD), announced a joint commitment to open a new community innovation center in southeast Fort Collins.

The innovation center, which was promised to the voters in 2015, will feature a state-of-the-art public library, multi-use spaces, as well as recreation and aquatics facilities. The center will be built on the 10 acres of land that PSD owns adjacent to Fossil Ridge High School.

The Library, City, and PSD are working on an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) that will guide the project timeline and phases moving forward. Construction on the project is anticipated to begin in 2025. Once the innovation center opens, the existing Council Tree Library (located less than a mile from the new site) will close and operations will move to the new facility.

## FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

The Library District's long-term **master plan** guides our 20-year vision for library services and facilities within the District. The master planning process identified key considerations for strategic decision making.

- More space is needed for public service to meet the community's vision for service and align with best practices for library space planning and design. Together, Old Town, Harmony, and Council Tree libraries are estimated to provide only 60-70% of the space needed today.
  - Estimated that 160,000 square feet of space for public service will be needed to serve the District's projected 2040 population – at least double the space provided in the Library District's three current libraries.
- Prioritize full-service, expanded library facilities in southeast Fort Collins to accommodate growing population in that area, including Timnath.
  - The community served by the Library District is projected to grow by more than 40% over the next 20 years, mostly within the Fort Collins city limits. We are seeing examples of that growth in the southeast area along the Harmony corridor.
  - Council Tree Library, which opened in 2009, was designed to accommodate a population of 47,000 people within a 3-mile radius. The current population, living within a 10-minute drive, is more than 63,500 people.
- Continue working to identify opportunities for full-service library in north Fort Collins, another key growth area.

## MAXIMIZING RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) IN LIBRARY FACILITIES

Strategies for achieving higher ROI – both capital and operational – in the Library District’s facilities include:

1. **District ownership and/or a strong, long-term partnership** for facilities (such as at the Harmony Library).
  - Because we are partnering with the City of Fort Collins and PSD on the facility’s overall construction and operations, the Library is able to significantly reduce costs we would have paid for a facility that we pursued on our own.
2. **High-quality, attractive, and sustainably-designed facilities.** The District’s facilities should be built to serve the District for many decades, with the flexibility to adapt to changing community needs and library services over time.
  - Co-create the new full-service library with input from the community and staff
  - Provide greater opportunities for the surrounding community to gather, learn, collaborate, and explore
3. **Strategically-located facilities.** Library facilities benefit from proximity to other community destinations, accessibility by multiple transportation modes, and shared parking with complementary uses.
  - Co-located with high-use recreation and aquatics facility managed by the City
  - Shared parking with complementary uses
  - Shared and co-managed innovation spaces
  - The new building site near Fossil Ridge High School is ideal for serving individuals and families.
    - The location is within easy access of five K-12 schools, making it attractive to students for after-school use. The site is also convenient to lifestyle amenities, restaurants, parks, and commercial businesses.
4. **Full-service destination libraries.** Libraries should be at least 30,000 square feet in order to maximize operational efficiency as well as support diverse programs and services.
  - To appropriately serve the larger population living in the vicinity – in addition to individuals who work, shop, and recreate along the Harmony corridor – calls for a full-service library upwards of 30,000 sq. ft. that includes expanded public spaces like study rooms, meeting and collaboration areas, additional areas designed for children and teens, and more space for collections and programs.

## FUNDING THE NEW LIBRARY

Poudre Libraries are trusted stewards of tax-funded resources. We have **proactively planned** for new library facilities with minimal financial impact to tax payers.

- Use designated capital funds in addition to possible lease-purchase funding to pay for our portion of the project, estimated at \$20 million.
- Do not anticipate seeking voter approval to raise funds for our portion of this project.
- Collaborate with the City on a capital campaign to enhance portions of the project.
- Because we are partnering with the City of Fort Collins and PSD on the facility's overall construction and operations, the Library is able to significantly reduce costs we would have paid for a facility that we pursued on our own (see *"Maximizing ROI in Library Facilities"*)
- The District owns Council Tree Library as a condominium space within Front Range Village Shopping Center. The Library Board of Trustees will look at options for Council Tree Library and make appropriate plans in the public's interest as we move through the project.

## **BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

We are excited to **co-create the new full-service library** with input from the community and staff. That way we can ensure we are building a space that not only offers essential library services, but also includes innovative features the community wants.

- Expanded essential library services including materials collection, programs and events, public computing and technology, children's area/storytime room, dedicated teen spaces, meeting and study spaces, and quiet areas
- "Innovation spaces" developed with community input but could include features like makerspaces, performance / theater space, exhibit areas, STEM learning hub, indoor/outdoor community spaces, and collaboration rooms
- "Unimagined possibilities" -- Sustainably-designed spaces to function for many decades, with the flexibility to adapt to changing community needs and library services over time. (see *"Maximizing ROI in Library Facilities"*)
- Co-located with high-use recreation and aquatics facility managed by the City and near to schools, neighborhoods, parks, shopping, and businesses for an easy-access, destination location