

# Celebrating Stunning Canadian Urban Library Branches | May 2017

by **Barbara Clubb (retired), Ottawa City Librarian (1995-2012)**

**Part 1 in an occasional series - [click here for Part 2](#)**

**Link to photos for all libraries: <https://goo.gl/photos/dgLkdUXJitgssZ3L8>**

## Introduction

Over the past decade, new and renovated public library branches have been showcasing our great Canadian architects and their most spectacular, innovative works. This is the first of a continuing series on stunning new and renovated library branches in Canada. So bookmark them for your travels. You will be inspired and warmly welcomed. The first set in the series includes:

- Brampton (Gore Meadows Community Centre and Library)
- Calgary (Nose Hill branch)
- Edmonton (Jasper Place branch)
- Mississauga Meadowvale Community Centre and Library)
- Ottawa (Beaverbrook branch)
- Toronto (Scarborough Civic Centre branch)
- Vaughan Civic Centre Resource Library and,
- Waterloo (John M. Harper branch).

The focus has been on striking design, natural light, technological and physical adaptability, accessibility and flexibility, environmental sustainability, sensitivity to surroundings both natural and cultural, and creating remarkable points of pride in these eight community gathering places. Technology is leveraged at every turn and includes self-check systems, maker spaces, creative studios, wireless access, hot spot loans and more. Four in the first set are part of a larger community facility. And still there are lots of books.

## Brampton (Gore Meadows Community Centre and Library)



← *Brampton-Gore Meadows. Credit ZAS Architects+Interiors*

### **Brampton Library, Gore Meadows Community Centre and Library branch.**

Brampton Library's 32K SF Gore Meadows branch opened in 2013 at a cost of \$21 M.<sup>1)</sup> Designed by ZAS Architects+Interiors, it functions within a 77K SF community centre as hub for a rapidly growing multi-cultural district of Brampton. The building is certified LEED Gold, and won a City of Brampton Urban Design Award. The library features an outside

reading garden, portable computers for in-library use, wireless access, a variety of group and individual study spaces and a computer lab for training and programming. In addition, this well rounded community facility also features a skateboard park, basketball courts, gymnasium and fitness centre and program spaces for youth drop-ins, art, cooking and wellness classes, guitar, spin classes, after-school programs and an accessible playground. In 2015 ZAS received the WoodWORKS award for the innovative use of wood in Gore Meadows. Says Marek Zawadzki, Senior Principal at ZAS “With the project, we took advantage of wood’s versatility to create beautiful public space that reflects a modern attitude but draws on a powerful connection to the surrounding natural landscape.”<sup>2)</sup>

## Calgary (Nose Hill branch)



← Calgary-Nose Hill. Credit Dean Mullin

**Calgary Public Library, Nose Hill Community Library** . I was present when the 17.8 K SF Nose Hill branch situated in north west Calgary opened 29 years ago in 1988 and it was leading-edge then.

It has now undergone a major \$2.1M renovation and re-opened [3] to the public in December 2016 - a wonderful, fully modern, accessible community learning hub.

Developed by DialogueDesign Architects, Nose Hill now includes an automated materials handling system, refurbished accessible washrooms, a new shelving and shelf-lighting system, an increase of 20% in public seating, the addition of two small meeting rooms, a Teen space, an Early Learning Centre, revitalized children’s area and the branch had a complete furniture replacement.<sup>3)</sup>

## Edmonton (Jasper Place branch)



←Edmonton-Jasper Place. Credit Hughes Condon Marler

Architects→



**Edmonton Public Library, Jasper Place branch** . Opened in 2013, this stunning 15.9K SF branch was built at a cost of \$12.8 M with a focus on sustainability and flexibility. Its special features include LEED Gold certification, space organized by large flexible social areas that are sheltered by a column free undulating roof form and stairs that double as reading spaces. Seventy-five % of construction waste was diverted from the landfill. Designed by Dub Architects and Hugh Condon Marler Architects, Jasper Place has earned a slew of awards including the 2014 Prairie Design Award of Merit, the Chicago Athenaeum/European Centre for Architecture-International Architecture award, the 2016 AIBC Lieutenant Governor of BC Award for Architecture and the 2016 Canadian Green Building Award-National Winner.

## Mississauga Meadowvale Community Centre and Library)



←Mississauga-Meadowvale. Credit Jay Esteron

**Mississauga Library System, Meadowvale Community Centre and Library** . Opened in October 2016,<sup>4)</sup> this 16.6K SF relocated branch is a part of a new 82K SF community centre built at a total cost \$37M. Designed by Perkins + Will Architects, the LEED Silver building is about creating a space for the community to use indoors and out for their minds and bodies-integrating the facility and the Lake Aquitaine Park.

As a community destination the library features a maker space and an outdoor reading terrace, a range of seating and meeting spaces some with a fireplace view and has won rave reviews from customers old and new alike. The facility also won a 2016 March of Dimes Award of Merit for Barrier-Free Design.



Mississauga-Meadowvale interior Children's section Credit Lisa Logan



Mississauga-Meadowvale interior Credit Lisa Logan



Mississauga-Meadowvale study area Credit Perkins+Will Architects

## Ottawa (Beaverbrook branch)

Ottawa-Beaverbrook. Credit Pat McGrath/Ottawa Citizen



### Ottawa Public Library | Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa , Beaverbrook branch

. At a cost of \$10M derived largely from development charges, this striking light-filled rebuild, opened in 2014,<sup>5)</sup> and took the branch from 10K SF to 24K SF in north Kanata, a fast growing section of west Ottawa. During construction residents made good use of a nearby library kiosk. Designed by Moriyama and Tashima Architects, the building is LEED Silver and received one of only four Ontario Library Association/Library Building Awards in

2015. Architect Emmanuelle Van Ruten<sup>6)</sup> ) said the design of the light-filled facility tries to adapt to the re-invention of libraries as more than just buildings with books, but meaningful meeting spaces where programming, services and learning for people of all ages can take place. Outside residents are delighted by a 13 turtle sculptures and a turtle mural inspired by the natural ecosystems. A unique feature is the electric vehicle charging stations outside and a green roof project is in the works. Beaverbrook is referred to as a library of the future: both flexible and a model for other OPL branches.

## Toronto (Scarborough Civic Centre branch)

**Toronto Public Library, Scarborough Civic Centre branch** . The landmark Scarborough Civic Centre branch, a Chatelaine cool library,<sup>7)</sup> TPL's 100<sup>th</sup> branch opened<sup>8)</sup> in May 2015.<sup>9)</sup> an open concept, one-floor 14.5K SF facility costing \$10.3M and designed by LGA Architectural Partners with Phillip H. Carter Architecture + Urban Planning, and Scott Torrence Landscape Architect. The design echoes the

Scarborough bluffs and lake Ontario shoreline. It brings animation to a formerly underutilized public space in a high density diverse neighbourhood and includes a public plaza, a reading garden, an echo-friendly green roof and a walkway link to the Civic Centre. It features TPL's third Digital Innovation Hub, a Kidstop Interactive Early Literacy Centre, all tables and stacks on wheels for maximum flexibility, high wooden ceilings and large welcoming floor-to-ceiling windows. The building has social and technological flexibility at its core. "There are basically no walls, just tree-like columns that everything can be arranged around depending on need."<sup>10</sup> This dynamic wood structure received an Ontario Woodwork Design Award in 2015, 2016 OLA Library Building Award (one of four) and the 2016 Ontario Association of Architects Design Excellence Award.



Scarborough Civic Centre Branch, Toronto, Credit TPL



Scarborough Civic Centre branch interior Credit TPL



Scarborough branch Kidsstop Early Literacy Centre Credit TPL



Scarborough branch interior Credit A-Frame Studio/LGA-AP



Scarborough branch interior Credit TPL



Scarborough branch interior Credit TPL/wyliepoon



Scarborough branch interior Credit TPL



Scarborough branch teens hanging out Credit TPL

## Vaughan Civic Centre Resource Library



←Vaughan-Civic Centre Resource Library. Credit ZAS Architects+Interiors  
**Vaughan Public Libraries, Civic Centre Resource Library branch library** . The largest of the eight libraries featured in this article (and another Chatelaine cool library<sup>11)</sup> ) is the spectacular new 36K SF Vaughan Civic Centre Resource Library. It opened May 2016 at a total cost of \$22.1M and links Vaughan’s historic buildings to the west and the new city hall to the east.<sup>12)</sup> Designed by Toronto’s ZAS Architects+Interiors it has two distinctive design concepts that create a sense of fun and delight: its sweeping curved roof and walls of glass and

reflective metal were inspired by the roller coaster at the nearby Canada’s Wonderland and theme park, and openness of the interiors creates an indoor space incorporating the elements you would find in a traditional Italian piazza including a central reading garden courtyard and patio where the community can gather, meet and exchange ideas.<sup>13)</sup> Some of the key features include: an abundance of natural light, a *Create It Studio* including a green room and music recording studio, iPad and Notebook kiosk availability, self-check in and out, interactive family space with heated floor, Teen Zone, comfortable reading lounge with great views, collaboration rooms for group study, drive through book return, electron vehicle charging stations and a milk snake in an aquarium in the kids area. Designed for a LEED Silver rating, the CCRL is too new to have won any awards...but keep watching.

**Waterloo (John M. Harper branch)**



←Waterloo-John M Harper. Credit Teeple Architects

**Waterloo Public Library, John M. Harper branch** . Waterloo’s John M. Harper branch designed by Teeple Architects with Garwood, Jones and Hanham Architects, opened in 2011 at a total cost of \$7.2M.<sup>14)</sup> The architecturally stunning library is in a shared facility with Waterloo’s Stork Family YMCA with 21.5K SF composed of 17.8K SF of library space and 3.7K SF common space. The \$22.3M facility was financed by the federal government gas tax, the City of Waterloo, the UMCA and the Library. The

University of Waterloo made the land available. As one of Chatelaine's "Cool Libraries"<sup>15)</sup> it has LEED Silver certification and won a 2013 Ontario Library Association New Library Building Award. The design emphasis was staff-on-the-move, enabling technology, clear-span visibility, eye-popping colours, interactive white board in the kids area, services for all groups, and zones for both quiet and more boisterous activity. WPL's project director and manager of collections Alannah d'Ailly says "People ask what the magic is. The space creates an experience that inspires, is playful and forward looking, while delivering an extroverted library service that puts staff on the floor face-to-face with the community in a library that is a 'great good place'."<sup>16)</sup>

*Hyperlinks to library notes accessible on October 30, 2018:*

1)  
<http://www.bramptonguardian.com/news-story/3074754-doors-open-at-new-library-rec-centre-tomorrow/>

2)  
<https://www.building.ca/zas-architects-interiors-recognized-by-wood-works-for-the-gore-meadows-community-centre-library-in-brampton/>

3)  
[calgarylibrary.ca/news/your-new-nose-hill-library](http://calgarylibrary.ca/news/your-new-nose-hill-library) (link no longer available \_FCKG\_BLANK\_TD\_)

4)  
<http://dailycommercialnews.com/Projects/News/2016/12/New-Meadowvale-Community-Centre-achieves-LEED-Silver-1020462W/>

5)  
<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/0807-col-chianello>

6)  
[toronto.com/news-story/5705993-new-beaverbrook-library-receives-architecture-award](http://toronto.com/news-story/5705993-new-beaverbrook-library-receives-architecture-award) (link no longer available)

7) 10) 11) 15)  
<http://www.chatelaine.com/living/coolest-libraries-in-canada/>

8)  
<http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2015/05/toronto-public-libraris-100th-branch-open-may-20th>

9)  
<https://www.canadianarchitect.com/architecture/toronto-public-libraris-scarborough-civic-centre-branch-opens/>

12)  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/vaughans-new-glass-and-metal-marvel-is-not-your-grandmothers-library/article31804654/?cmpid=rss1>

13)  
<http://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/6549752-an-exclusive-tour-of-vaughan-s-civic-centre-resource-library/>

14)  
<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/grand-magazine/20130103/282235188039600>

16)  
Waterloo Public Library data submission for this article, February 2017.  
[Canadian library architecture](#), [Canadian branch libraries](#), [library buildings](#)

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