



GRANDE PRAIRIE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Business Case:

Pocket Library at Eastlink Centre

Objective

This case proposes the creation of a pocket Grande Prairie Public Library (GPPL) mini-branch within the Eastlink Centre to enhance equitable access to library services for the surrounding community. By bringing core library resources closer to where people live, play, and gather, this initiative will serve individuals who may face barriers reaching the main library location. It also offers an opportunity for GPPL to connect with a broader and more diverse demographic, particularly those who regularly use the recreation centre but may not yet engage with traditional library spaces.

Background

GPPL is committed to expanding access to library services in ways that are inclusive, responsive, and sustainable. A pocket library branch within the Eastlink Centre would undoubtedly provide improved access, as it is a high-traffic community hub that serves thousands of residents each week.

This initiative builds on previous explorations by GPPL to extend service reach, including a past proposal to install book lockers at the Eastlink Centre. While that project was supported by City Council at the time, the pop-up library is the model that many public libraries now favour for service expansion, as it includes the community-space element that the lockers alone do not provide. The need for more accessible library service points remains clear, particularly for residents who live closer to the Eastlink Centre than to the main library branch.

The pocket library model is gaining momentum across Canada as a cost-effective way to broaden public access to core library services. Examples within Alberta include the self-serve mini-branch at Collicutt Centre in Red Deer,¹ and the Rocky Ridge Express Library in Calgary.² These smaller, strategically located service points offer browsable collections, holds pickup, and library programs in community spaces outside of traditional branches. For GPPL, a pocket library at the Eastlink Centre represents an opportunity to:

- Improve geographic access to library services, especially for underserved neighbourhoods in the area;
- Engage a new and diverse user base, including families, youth, and seniors who frequent the recreation and leisure facility but may not currently use the library;
- Create a welcoming “third space” within the Eastlink Centre. Third spaces are defined as places other than home or the workplace, where visitors can relax, read, and connect during or after recreational activities;
- Pilot expanded services in a flexible, scalable model that could inform future decisions around a second branch. This includes extended open hours, as the pocket library would have the same access hours as Eastlink Centre.

This proposal aligns with the City of Grande Prairie’s goals of strengthening purposeful relationships between organizations, promoting a vibrant quality of life, and fostering an inclusive, connected community.³ By co-locating library services with an existing municipal asset, the pocket library model offers a high-impact, low-barrier path to meet evolving community needs, which supports Action #D9.2 of the City of Grande Prairie’s Recreation and Culture Study in integrating multiple amenities in one facility or location to ensure access for all.⁴

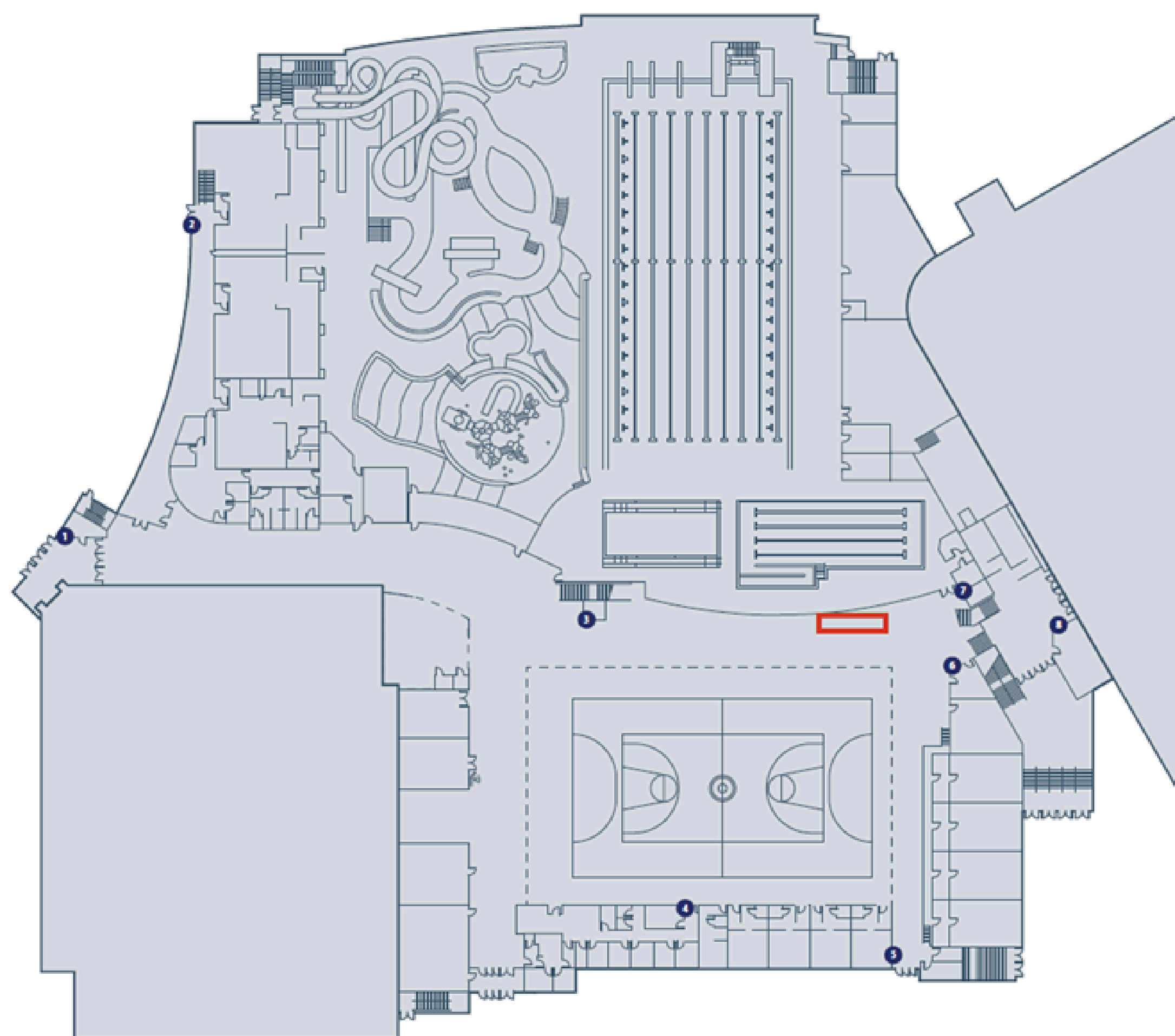
Analysis

In reviewing options for expanding the reach of library services without establishing a second branch, another potential solution to explore is an all-in-one, fully-automated library service machine. Envisionware, a known library vendor, offers this technology; their automated machine offers collections searching, the ability to place and pick up holds, the vending of a small number of items, the creation of library registration sign ups, a returns facility, and a wireless hotspot.

Though this option is still less costly than a second branch location, the total cost for Envisionware's technology ⁵ would be approximately \$350,000 CAD, with continued annual costs associated with maintenance. While the fully-automated service machine is a sophisticated and modern option to providing library resources, it does not provide the leisurely ambiance of a physical space with browsable collections and comfortable seating.

In discussions between GPPL and the Eastlink Centre, four locations were initially identified as potential development areas for the pocket library. Two were second-floor locations, eliminated due to floor load-bearing concerns. A third location, situated on the main floor and adjacent to the Jugo Juice, was considered but ultimately not chosen as it would be a potential choke point with all the foot traffic present in the area.

The ideal location that was settled upon is outlined in red below:



Advantages:

- Proximity to the Second Cup coffee shop; this adds to the cozy environment of the space, and mirrors the library’s main location in having food and drinks available nearby.
- Glass windows on one side are already present, making the space feel less enclosed.
- As this location is already in a high-traffic area, there may be less attempted theft of items.
- Located on the main floor, so load-bearing capacity of floor is not a potential concern.
- Location is accessible, as it is on the main floor.

Considerations	Solutions
Elevated noise levels at certain times of day/year.	Sound panels have been added to the estimated budget for this project.
There is no vacant lease space currently available at Eastlink Centre.	Using partition systems from the City of Grande Prairie, a new space will be created.
As this is a primarily self-serve branch, security is a potential issue.	Utilize existing security staff at the Eastlink Centre to patrol the Pocket Library; high school students from adjacent schools can volunteer for class credit so that it is left unstaffed less frequently.
Parking at Eastlink Centre can be difficult at peak times	It seems unlikely that the pocket library would render the parking lot more congested; usage of the pocket library will most likely be primarily from patrons who are already frequenting Eastlink Centre for other purposes.
Access to the Pocket Library	The access model could be either fully open to the public or controlled via scanning in with an Eastlink pass or library card.

Estimated Project Budget

In addition to architectural costs that have yet to be determined, the following costs have been identified as essential to successful establishment of the project. Pricing is approximate, and some pricing has been informed by Red Deer Public Library's report on financing the Collicutt Centre pop-up library.

Item	Estimated Cost (CAD)
Incorporating new doors into existing FOB system (lockset installation, face plate, etc)	\$2,000
Cabling (installing technology data cables for all equipment)	\$2,000
Furniture & Supplies (includes self-checkout machine and searchable catalogue for placing requests)	\$75,000
Add as location in Polaris (GPPL's library software)	\$700
Review of location from engineering firm	\$5,000
Sound blocking panels from Uline (per 10 units)	\$700
Direct Dial Security Cameras – Provides head count information to monitor library use including time of day/days of week	\$1,500
Router + 1 year subscription	\$800
Proposed partition systems from City of Grande Prairie - 70 lineal feet of glass partitioning, including electrical work	\$42,000
	TOTAL: \$129,700

Potential Funding Sources

- Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) – Large Stream
 - Provides financial assistance ranging from \$125,000 to \$1 million for the upgrade, expansion, purchase, or construction of public-use community facilities.
- Corporate Sponsorships
 - GPPL will explore sponsorship opportunities with local companies and corporations, including the potential for naming rights and other recognition options.
- Champions of the Grande Prairie Public Library
 - GPPL’s fundraising group may be able to support specific elements of the Pocket Library through targeted sponsorship or donations.

Ongoing Operational Costs

Staffing

Though this branch will be largely self-serve, a staff-person will need to visit the location daily to ensure that the return bin is emptied, items brought in for holds are on the shelves, and that the location is clean and tidy for patrons’ usage. In partnership with nearby schools, students could volunteer their time at the library in exchange for class credit.

Working within this model, GPPL is able to absorb the costs for staffing at this time. Costs associated with staffing would be approximately as follows:

Staff	Cost	Cost Per Year (CAD)
1 Circulation Clerk, at Step 1 of salary grid (\$20.10 per hour)	\$301.50 (\$20.10 x 3hrs/d = \$60.30 per day x 5d per week)	\$15,678.00 (weekly cost x 52 weeks)
High school volunteers	N/A	N/A

Other Ongoing Costs

Item	Cost per year (CAD)
Insurance (policy add-on for GPPL)	\$200
Router annual fees	\$200
Browsable collection refresh	\$500
Self-checkout machine annual fees	\$2,100

Total (Staffing + Other ongoing costs) = \$18,678

Gift-In-Kind Contributions

Just as GPPL benefits from being housed in the Montrose Cultural Centre, the success of the Pocket Library at the Eastlink Centre will be supported through several key gift-in-kind contributions, including:

- **Lease:** Waiver of rental fees for the Pocket Library space within the Eastlink Centre
- **Security:** Inclusion of the Pocket Library in regular security patrols within the facility
- **Custodial Services:** Incorporation of the Pocket Library into the Eastlink Centre’s routine custodial schedule

We estimate the value of these gift-in-kind contributions to total approximately \$35,000 annually.

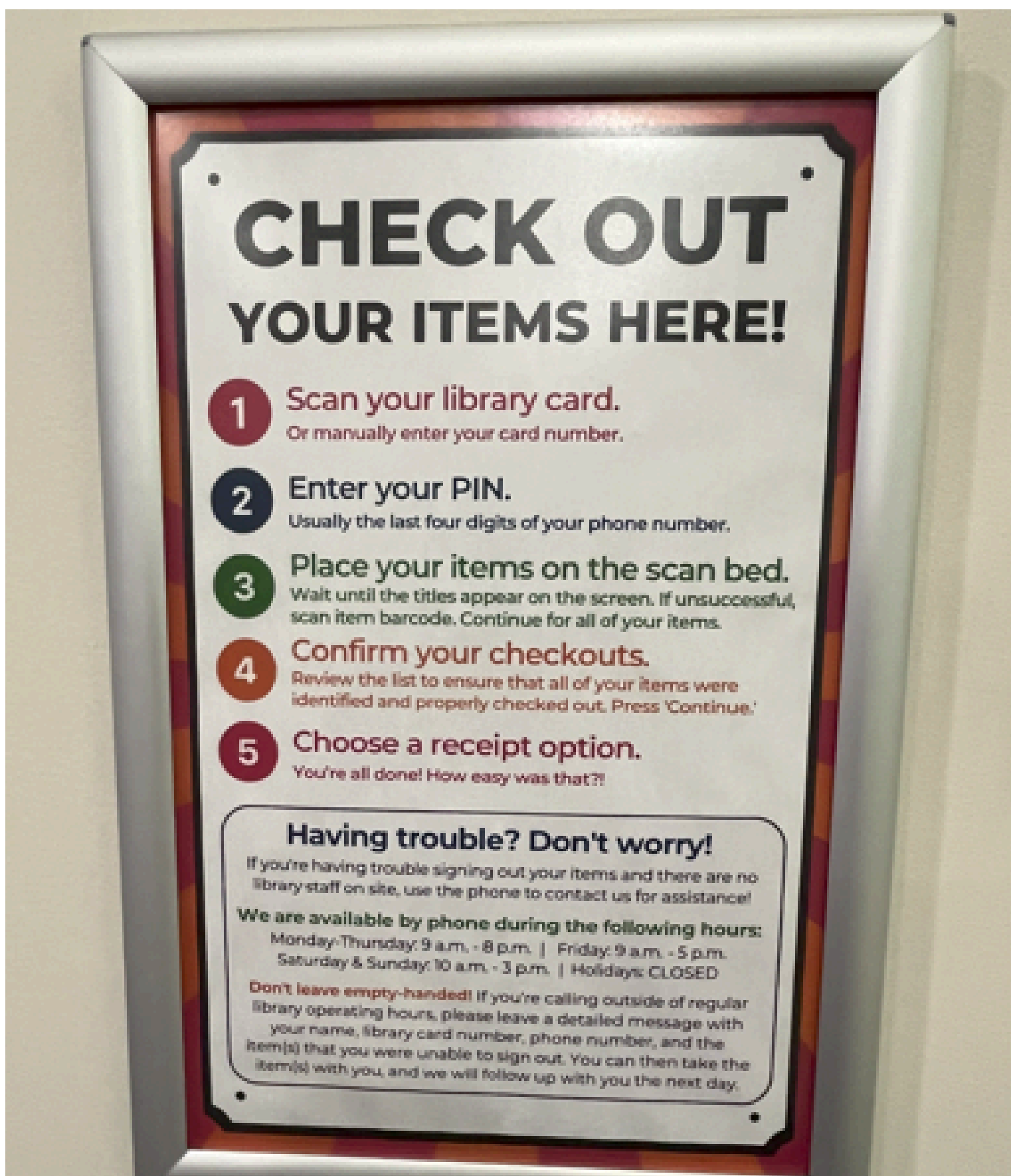
Key Takeaways

- Pocket library branches are part of a growing trend in public libraries in Canada to offer a cost-effective way to bring resources to the wider community, with communities such as Red Deer and Lethbridge having already established their own mini-branches.
- GPPL's pocket branch would allow for an expanded reach of library service in Grande Prairie, and help eliminate geographical barriers to using the library, while simultaneously introducing new user groups to the services offered. As Eastlink Centre is a vibrant and well-used space that serves thousands of people weekly, it is an ideal location to establish the pocket library as a place where patrons can relax in between partaking in other recreational activities.

Appendix

1. Collicutt Centre Pocket Library in Red Deer, AB. Photos courtesy of The Collicutt Branch Pilot Project: Six Month Review and Dan Lemieux.







2. Rocky Ridge Express Library in Calgary, AB. Photos courtesy of Calgary Public Library.



3. City of Grande Prairie Strategic Plan 2022-2025, p. 7-8. Accessed at: <https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2023-08/Councils%20Strategic%20Plan%202022-2025%20-%20Revised.pdf>

4. City of Grande Prairie's Recreation and Culture Strategy, p. 52. Accessed at: <https://cityofgp.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024-04-24%20Grande%20Prairie%20Strategy-SM.pdf>



5. Envisionware 24-hour Library. Photo courtesy of North Vancouver District Public Library.