

Date of Meeting: March 27, 2025

Report Number: A19-25

Report Subject: Welcoming Spaces Library Consultation Project Report – 2025 Update

Recommendation:

1. THAT the Clarington Public Library Board receive Administrative Report No. A19-25: Welcoming Spaces Library Consultation Project Report 2025 Update as information.

Background

In Fall 2023, the five “Lakeshore Libraries” of Durham Region—Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, and Clarington—commissioned Hume McKenna Associates (HMA) to conduct a needs assessment examining library services, resources, policies, and spaces, alongside insights from focus group discussions with patrons, to develop recommendations that balance the needs of all library users, including those experiencing homelessness.

In January 2024, HMA released the *Welcoming Spaces Report*, outlining actionable recommendations with timelines for implementation. Throughout 2024, the CLMA took measured steps to advance these recommendations—fostering inclusive and welcoming spaces, enhancing public and staff safety, strengthening risk management practices, and reinforcing CLMA’s role as a vital community hub where meaningful connections are made.

Following Administrative Report No. A23-24, presented to the Board on October 25, 2024, this report provides an update on CLMA’s efforts to support vulnerable populations.

Report Overview

Throughout 2024, the CLMA implemented several recommendations for added safety and comfort from the Action Plan from Welcoming Spaces Report including:










- Review and implementation of policies and procedures related to public/staff safety, risk mitigation, and supporting vulnerable populations. New or revised policies and Standardized Operating Procedures include:
 - User Expectations Policy

- Service Excellence Policy
- Children in the CLMA Policy
- Accessibility Policy
- Food Pantry Procedure
- Items or Suspected Illegal Substances Found in CLMA locations Procedure and Tracking Tool
- Opening and Closing Procedures
- Refusal to Leave Location at Closing Procedure
- Suspected Overdose in CLMA Locations Procedure
- Unattended Children Procedure
- Workplace Harassment and Workplace Violence Procedures
- Staff Safety with Emergency Response Procedure
- Refreshed Incident Reporting forms and tracking
- Established non-incident protocol and tracking tool for staff to capture behaviours/patron concerns that are disruptive but not a violation of the User Expectations Policy
- Strengthened and expanded Community Partnerships in the CLMA to create wrap-around services and outreach in our spaces related to Housing, Newcomers and Settlement Services, Income Support through ODSP, Employment Supports and Harm Reduction services.
- Expanded Food Pantry Services with Feed the Need at Bowmanville to include female hygiene products, toiletries, and more cultural food selections.
- Collaborated with Seeds of Hope for care packages to be distributed at Bowmanville, Newcastle, and Courtice libraries in support of individuals in need.
- Continued attendance at the ICONIC Clarington Helps group through St. Paul's United Church to support persons experiencing poverty and homelessness.
- Created new partnership with post-secondary institutions and welcomed two (2) fourth-year Social Work students from Trent University for a field placement from September to mid-March. The SW students assisted customers with accessing vital social services including housing, food and income supports.
- Established stronger ties to Durham Regional Police Services, The Region of Durham Social Services Outreach Team including focused visits to the library locations from the outreach workers when CLMA staff were concerned about individuals.
- Established a multi-year training plan for staff that includes navigating challenging customers and having select staff trained in crisis intervention and de-escalation, mental health training.











Action Plan from Welcoming Spaces Report

This Action Plan presented comprehensive actions, and suggested priorities and timeframes to assist libraries with their implementation processes. The timeline below reflects CLMA's initial assessment of priorities. All 2024 objectives have been completed. Digital strategies such as staff headsets for Bowmanville and electronic monitoring devices for public washrooms will continue to be explored as the budget permits. The next update to the Library Board will be in Q3 2025.















Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
Enabling Strategies				
The Project Team will map out a more detailed Implementation Plan that spans the next 6 months and present to the CEOs in time for their scheduled March meeting.				
In reviewing the recommendations, leadership will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify which recommendations they wish to adopt, Which are best suited for individual implementation and where efficiencies can be gained through collaboration Develop a resource allocation and/or funding plan to support implementation of the selected recommendations. 				
Develop individual system Action Plans aimed at implementing recommendations from the report.				
Implement Collaborative Pilot Project Approach so that changes can be tested before scaling up at all organizations.				
Form Co-Design planning teams at each organization for ongoing evaluation and planning.				
Engage with or enhance engagement with multi-service community tables at municipal and regional levels to participate in planning & discussions about homelessness issues.				
Communication Strategy				
Communication Plan, to communicate the work of the 'Welcoming Spaces' report, will be developed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Public Boards 				
Develop a Collaboration Plan to guide a continued collaboration and inter-library communication process.				
Initiate and/or continue collaborative conversations with other library partners and with community				





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Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
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partners to facilitate information sharing and problem solving.				
Ongoing Learning and Development Strategies				
Identify opportunities for learning and initiate collaborative conversations with community partners that will expand library knowledge of community resources related to homelessness services e.g./ By-Name List.				
Develop shared staff training plans and begin implementation				
Develop working group mechanisms for front-line staff from collaborating library systems to communicate, support, and problem-solve together e.g./ Slack Channel				
Schedule field trips for leadership to visit collaborating library sites to identify Best Practices that can be shared.				
High Priority and Quick Wins				
Establish priority relationships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durham Region Police Services Region of Durham Outreach Teams Homelessness Specialist for staff training and support, including safety guard training. 				
Provide Resource List for staff to use (Appendix One). Consider making this available as a community resource in libraries also and designating resources to update with season changes.				
Implement 'one-pager' for situation management				
Implement visible clocks and calendars. And simple supports for basic needs – hot or cold drinks, socks, and feminine hygiene products.				
Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage (or other available messaging) with Overdose Prevention number Ensure positive library expectations for behavior are clearly visible. 				

Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
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Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations (quick wins) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedbug monitoring process • Remove or reduce use of plexiglass 				
Implement Safety and Accessibility Recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic washroom monitoring in all locations • Develop an Accommodation Plan process with patrons and key service partners. • Enhance security guard training 				
Implement Enhanced Support options for staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced process for staff debriefing including space and time considerations 				
Implementing Enhanced Support options for staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WRAP training • Management Support for debriefing and support skills 				
Higher Complexity				
Begin developing programming related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-patron understanding, empathy and 'stigma busting' • Offering or enhancing mainstream library use and resources by people who are experiencing challenges related to homelessness 				
Develop Survey Tool to measure and address user and staff perceptions of safety				
IHI Continuous Improvement training for selected managers through IHI				
Co-Design/Co-production training and mentoring for managers.				
Develop and Pilot (at limited locations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer navigators • Changes to exclusion practices 				

Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations

Implementation Action	Suggested Timeframe			
	Q1 2024	Q3 2024	2025	2026 +
Develop and pilot, as a collaboration between libraries, a social worker or community health specialist to work with the CLMA.				
Research storage solutions and develop related facility adaptations in co-design process.				
Establish a dialogue with education institutions and community partners to pilot use of Social Service worker students for focused library locations support.				

Report Submitted by:
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 March 27, 2025