

3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

3.1 CONSULTATION PROCESS

In order to ensure that the development of the building program be an open and transparent process it was essential that as many people be involved as possible. The public engagement process included three ways in which public consultation was sought and given:

- **Focus groups** of various stakeholders, e.g. business, cultural and educational organizations, etc.
- **Public meetings**
- **Public surveys** available in print and on the Library's website

The three phase public consultation process was an iterative one, encouraging several rounds of participation in meetings held in February, April and June, 2008.

3.2 PHASE ONE – FEBRUARY, 2008

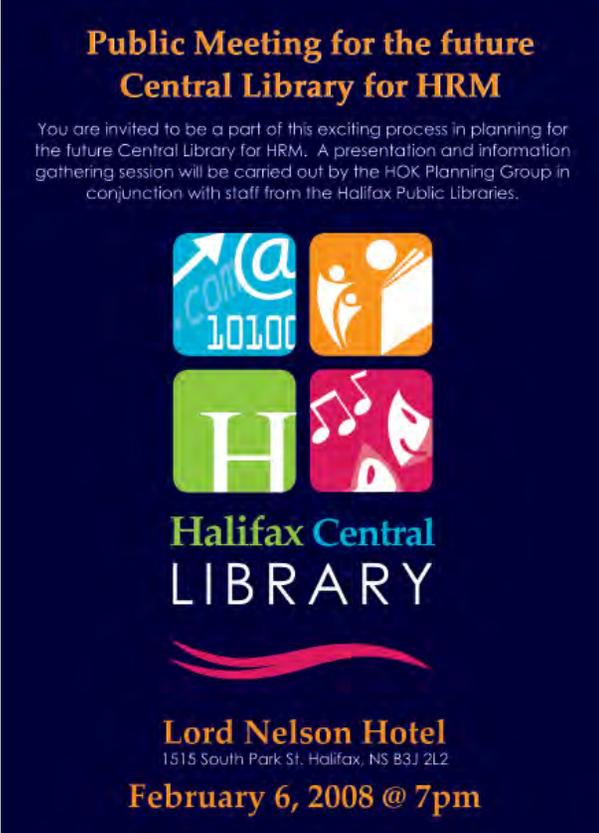
The first phase of the consultation process was based on meeting with a broad cross section of stakeholders who were invited to attend a series of sessions over a three day period in early February, concluding with a public meeting on the evening of February 6, 2008 at the Lord Nelson Hotel. The purpose of the focus groups and the public meeting was to re-introduce the idea of a Central Library for HRM and to determine what it is that the residents of the community want to see within the Central Library. The presentation featured examples of how other cities around the world have developed their libraries (Appendix A). The public meeting concluded with a number of key questions that prompted a very exciting discussion amongst the audience.

The outcome of the first set of focus group meetings and the public meeting assisted the consultants in identifying the type of library the community hopes to have in HRM. For those individuals who were unable to attend any of the focus group sessions or the public meeting, a survey was made available at all of the branch libraries and

on the Halifax Public Libraries website. The response to the survey was nothing short of extraordinary and had, along with the information gathered at the focus groups and public meeting, a significant influence on the development of the three alternate themes for the building program for the Central Library. These themes were presented at the second round of focus groups and public meeting held in early April, 2008.

The focus groups were composed of representatives from the community who have specific knowledge or could provide insight into various aspects of HRM and could assist in developing the overall content and context of the building program for the Central Library. Throughout the first round of focus groups held in February, 2008, each of the stakeholder groups was well represented.

The focus groups functioned at specific interest levels, (e.g. business people, teens); and, the consultants were able to gain insight specifically into what the Central Library could provide for these groups and the benefits that the stakeholders could, in turn, provide for the Library. It was through these engaging and more personalized discussions that the consultants were able to identify recurring themes from each of these groups. These conversations assisted in creating the alternate models which were then presented at the second round of public meetings, ultimately influencing the final shape and theme of the building program.



**Public Meeting for the future
Central Library for HRM**

You are invited to be a part of this exciting process in planning for the future Central Library for HRM. A presentation and information gathering session will be carried out by the HOK Planning Group in conjunction with staff from the Halifax Public Libraries.



**Halifax Central
LIBRARY**

Lord Nelson Hotel
1515 South Park St. Halifax, NS B3J 2L2

February 6, 2008 @ 7pm



The focus groups included throughout this consultation process were the following:

- Board Members & Capital Steering Committee
- Municipal Representatives, Directors and Councillors
- Halifax Public Libraries Staff
- Arts, Educational, Young Professionals
- Merchants, Business Associates, Chamber of Commerce
- Teenagers
- Local Partners

There was a strong turnout for each of the focus group sessions and all of the responses were recorded. In addition to each of the focus groups, senior management representatives from the Halifax Public Libraries were also in attendance and were available to answer questions or issues specific to the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library or the public library system in general.



3.3 SURVEY RESULTS

The response to the survey issued at the first public meeting and made available at all the local branches throughout HRM for a two week time frame afterwards was overwhelming (Appendix B). Over 700 people responded to the survey, answering each of the questions and writing very thoughtful and insightful comments. Highlights of the survey identified that almost half of the respondents use the Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library, distantly followed by Alderney Gate Public Library and Keshen Goodman Public Library. One of the most interesting aspects gleaned from this survey was that over 58% of those who responded visit the Library in person more than once a week. A large percentage of the Library users also navigate through the Halifax Public Libraries' website more than once a week to obtain information. The responses provided very useful information for the Central Library project.

3.4 PHASE TWO – APRIL, 2008

Phase Two was the result of feedback and information gathered during the first phase of the project. After the completion of Phase One, the consultants reviewed all the results and observed that various points or themes kept recurring. As such, three themes or models were extrapolated from the information and a series of building programs was developed, one each based on culture, learning and partnership.

Without developing a building representation or creating specific floor plans for the Central Library, the challenge was to graphically represent each of the themes in a way that made the programs and service areas spatially relevant and connected. The final presentation showed an overall building program for each of the suggested themes through different sized boxes that were linked through connecting lines. The core elements of the foundation of each of the models remained consistent throughout. The program areas specific to each of the themes: culture, learning and partnership, were colour coded to differentiate among the themes.

The second phase of the public consultation process was held between April 7 and April 9, 2008. Over a three day

period, the focus groups were once again invited to attend a meeting where the consultants presented an update of the project. For this round of meetings, several focus groups were merged. Although it was imperative that each person at the focus sessions have the opportunity to express his or her idea or thoughts regarding each of the proposed themes it was thought that it was possible to still do this effectively by combining some of the focus groups. The focus groups for phase two of the consultation process were the following:

- Library Board Members / Library Capital Campaign Committee / Halifax Public Libraries Senior Management Team
- Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library Staff
- Combined groups of academics, representatives from the arts community, education, young professionals, councillors, merchants, business associates, Chamber of Commerce and Municipal representatives.

2nd Public Meeting

Future Central Library for HRM

You are invited to be a part of this exciting process in planning the future Central Library for HRM.

The HOK Planning Group in conjunction with Halifax Public Libraries will present building program scenarios and a project update. Come tell us what you think!



Halifax Central LIBRARY

Lord Nelson Hotel
1515 South Park St. Halifax, NS B3J 2L2

Wednesday, April 9, 2008/ 7 p.m.

The consultants gained a great amount of insight as to the possible shape that the final building program for the Central Library would eventually take.

The presentation to each of the focus groups reviewed the results from the survey, and presented the three themes that had evolved since the last time the focus groups had come together. The presentation outlined the core elements of the Library and the functions that would occur in each of the major services (Appendix A). Subsequently, the themes were described focussing on the function of each and the ways in which the proposed models would benefit HRM. The presentation was supplemented by images supporting each of the programs visually explaining the function or role that each of the services may contribute to the Central Library.

The public meeting held on the evening of April 9, 2008, once again held at the Lord Nelson Hotel, was well attended. The evening began with an introduction from Judith Hare, CEO, Halifax Public Libraries. Rob Marshall with HOK and Susan Kent, library consultant, presented each of the building programs for the cultural, learning and partnership models. After completing the overview of each of the themes, the audience broke into groups. Each of the groups had a facilitator and three presentation panels summarizing each of the three themes. The facilitators engaged their group in a discussion pertaining to each of the themes, while recording everyone's comments and ideas. The purpose of breaking the audience down into small facilitated groups of 10 to 12 individuals was to learn which of the models the public preferred or what components from each of the models individuals liked. The facilitated groups were successful and lively. The consultants gained a great amount of insight as to the possible shape that the final building program for the Central Library would eventually take. Section 3.5 breaks down in detail each of the alternative themes presented at the second public meeting.

3.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE THEMES

As previously mentioned in the Public Consultation section, the three alternate themes that were intended to serve as ideas for development for the Central Library came about as a result of the participative approach adopted for this project. In discussing the three themes the residents of HRM clearly stated that the Central Library needs to function as a pivotal institution in the Municipality. Because an immense amount of input and feedback were gathered throughout the process, it was necessary to determine recurring themes and statements which arose either through conversations, responses to the survey and or comments made on the website. After carefully sifting through all the information gathered, three major themes emerged describing the Central Library as a centre for (1) community culture, (2) community learning or (3) community partnership.



3.5.1 COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR CULTURE

Culture plays an integral role within the community and is very important to the residents. After many discussions with the focus groups and the public, it became evident that what is missing within the Municipality is a publicly-owned theatre space that would accommodate approximately 250 people and is centrally located in the downtown. It was felt that there was a need for public exhibition space for local and visiting artists. As a result, a potential theme for the library emerged and was developed to incorporate specific components that relate to culture.

The Community Centre for Culture is based on the concept that the Library is a vibrant cultural centre and a venue for cultural programs such as music and dance performances, author readings, films and a variety of other events (Figure 2). The library building would include various sized spaces for these cultural programs and exhibitions as well as an outdoor area for performances. The Library's collection in the areas of culture and the arts would be a major asset in this thematic approach.

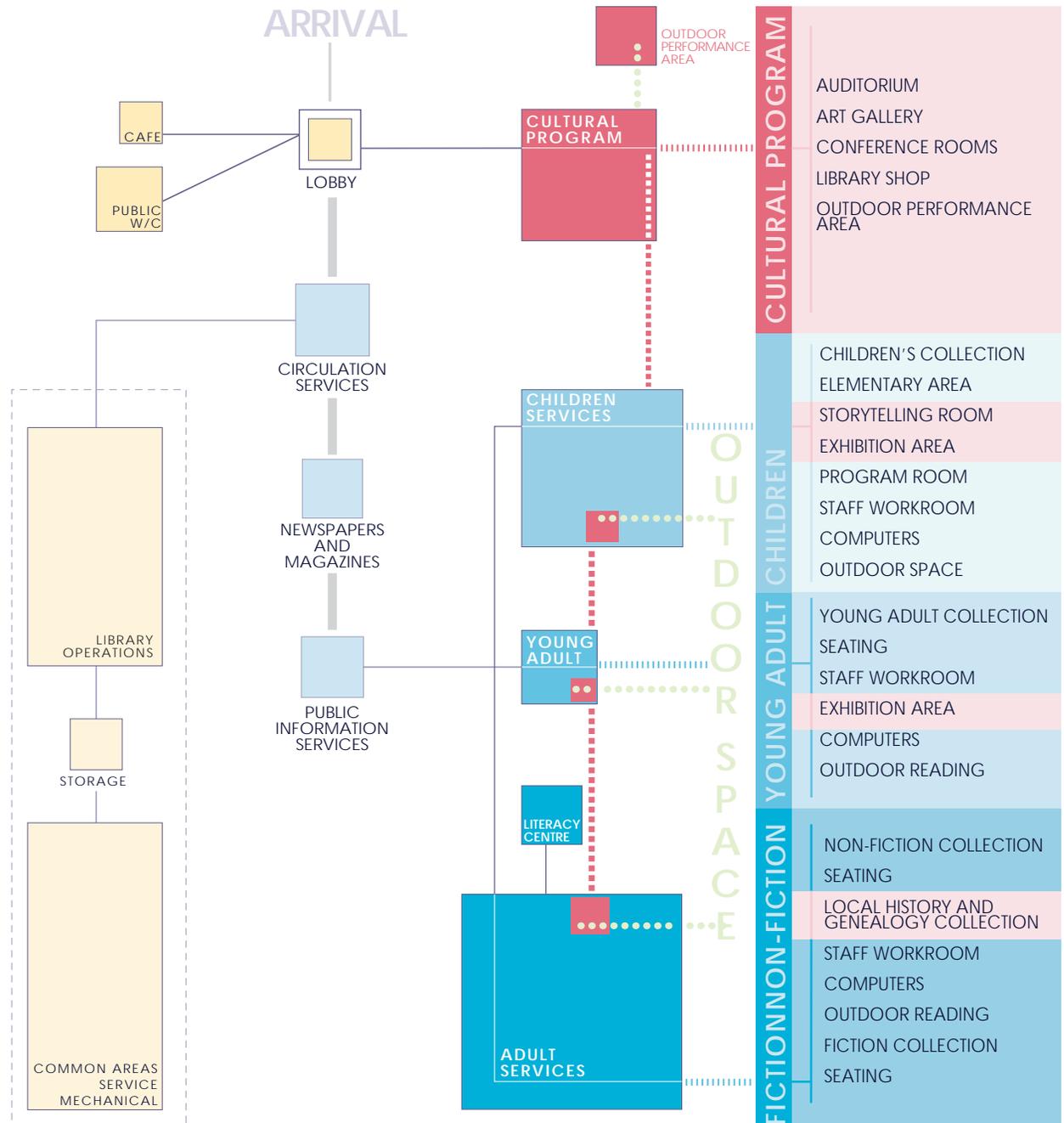


Figure 2: Community Centre for Cultural Building Program

3.5.2 COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR LEARNING

Learning and education are essential functions of public libraries, roles that the Central Library will continue to play. Residents want to be able to continue coming to the Library to read, do research and take advantage of all the opportunities that the Library will offer. The learning theme provides multi-faceted functional areas for education and skill development combined with the traditional role of the library in providing reading materials and a place to meet.

The Community Centre for Learning would emphasize the Library's role in education and lifelong learning (Figure 3). The library's collections and services in the areas of local history / genealogical collections, adult literacy, computer literacy, early childhood education, parenting, health information, and preparing young people for education and careers would be enhanced by the creation of learning spaces such as study rooms, homework spaces, classrooms for adult literacy students, an auditorium for lectures and discussions, meeting rooms for programs presented by a variety of educational groups and a computer classroom for online learning.

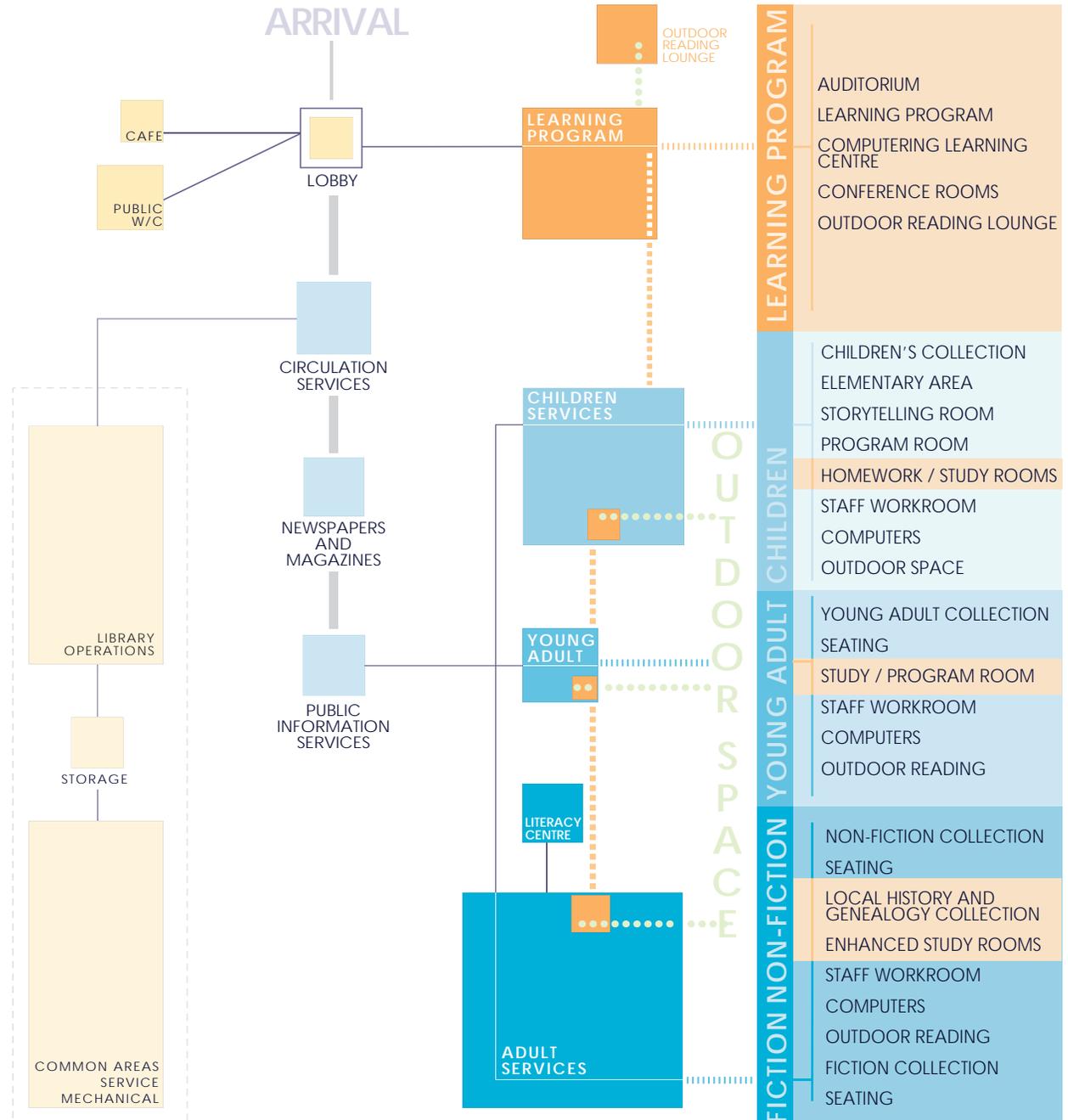


Figure 3: Community Centre for Learning Building Program

3.5.3 COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR PARTNERSHIP

There is a lack of space within the Municipality for small organizations and not-for-profit groups to function and remain accessible to the community. As a result of this issue, a partnership theme developed.

The Community Centre for Partnership would emphasize existing or future partnerships that the library may have within the community (Figure 4). The Library building will feature a mix of spaces for use by community organizations, who will in turn enhance the Library's cultural and learning functions through major events and or workshops produced and presented by these organizations. The Library building would also include office space available to community partners on a leased basis.

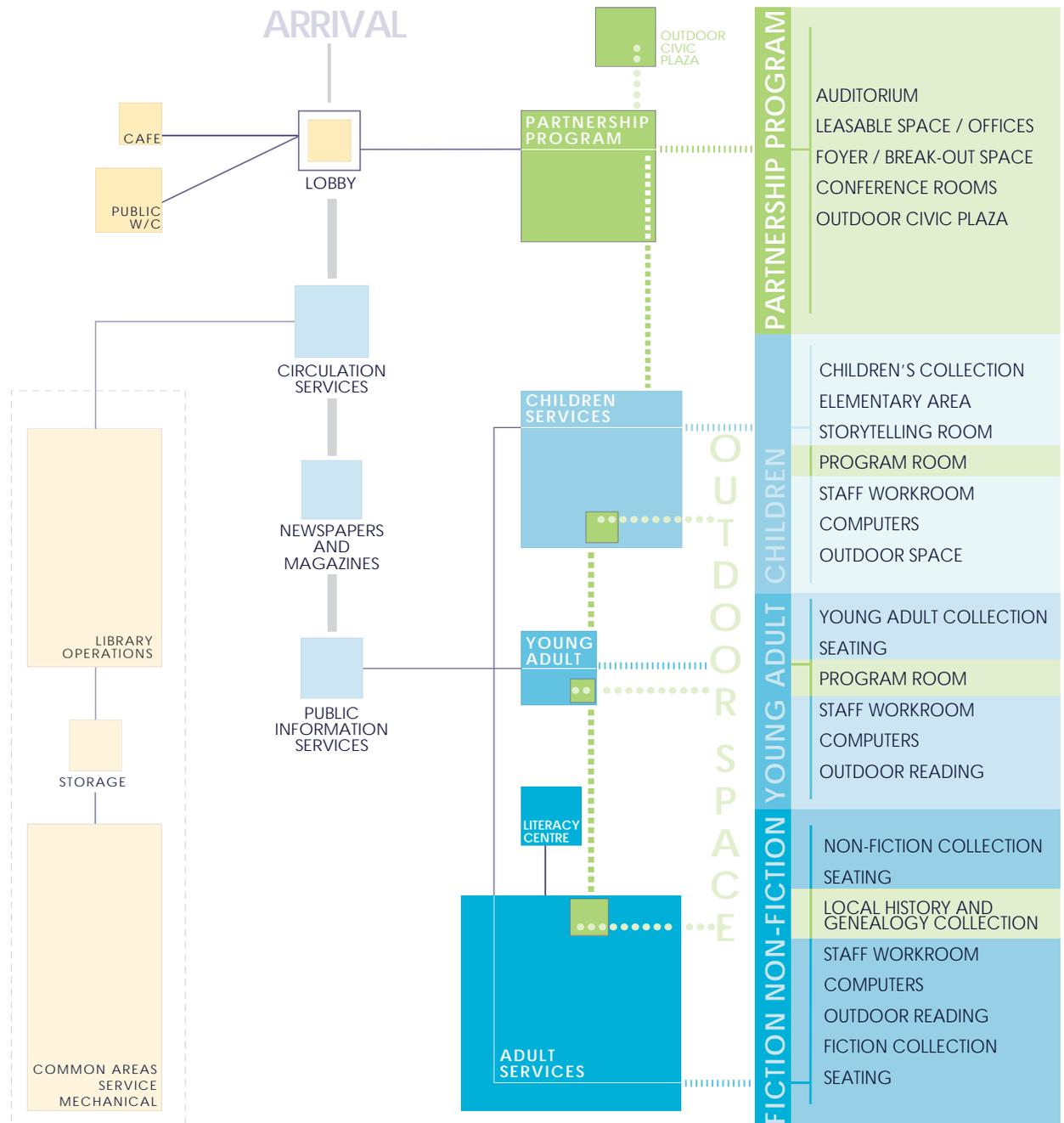


Figure 4: Community Centre for Partnership Building Program

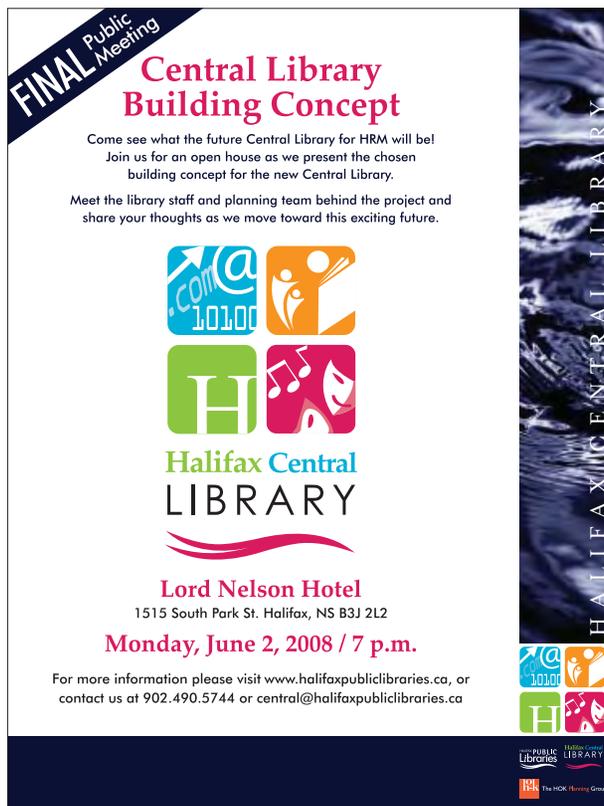
3.6 PHASE THREE – JUNE, 2008

The final public meeting was held on the evening of June 2, 2008 where Rob Marshall and Susan Kent presented the complete building program and space requirements for the proposed Central Library. The evening began with a graphical display of each of the main public services to be provided within the Library. Those attending the meeting were encouraged to review each of the panels and ask questions to any of the staff or consultants. Judith Hare, CEO of Halifax Public Libraries, opened the presentation by introducing the final portion of the project and providing an overview of the entire project and what the next stage will involve.

The presentation reviewed the guiding principles used in determining the building program. These will continue to be used to guide the next phase of design. Included in

this presentation was a description of the benefits that will occur as a result of the development of the Central Library. Each of the benefits highlighted the positive return that this new facility will have on HRM, such as increased collections for adults, teens and children, civic performance space and increased activity along Spring Garden Road. The presentation focussed on describing the final building program and each of the services and their function within the Central Library (Appendix A).

The presentation wrapped up with a question and answer period. There was a very favourable response to the presentation, and the audience had a number of questions. The evening concluded with a resounding amount of support for the future development of the Central Library.



FINAL Public Meeting

Central Library Building Concept

Come see what the future Central Library for HRM will be!
Join us for an open house as we present the chosen building concept for the new Central Library.

Meet the library staff and planning team behind the project and share your thoughts as we move toward this exciting future.



Halifax Central LIBRARY

Lord Nelson Hotel
1515 South Park St. Halifax, NS B3J 2L2

Monday, June 2, 2008 / 7 p.m.

For more information please visit www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca, or contact us at 902.490.5744 or central@halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

