

New Georgetown library taking shape

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

Progress on the Georgetown library/Halton Hills Cultural Centre expansion and renovation is on schedule and moving swiftly towards its December completion date.

An enthusiastic chief librarian Jane Diamanti and Cultural Centre supervisor Jamie Smith took *The Independent & Free Press* on a tour recently, showing off its multi-levelled wide open interior space at the corner of Market and Church Sts. that will soon become a landmark building in Georgetown. It's slated to re-open to the public in January 2013.

The \$11.3 million library will be expanded to almost three times its original size— 34,400 sq. ft.— that Diamanti says will be more appropriate for a community of this size. Plus, the Cultural Centre and Gallery will receive substantial upgrades worth \$1.9 million. The total square footage for the Library and Cultural Centre will be 51,000 sq. ft.

"It's a much more complex building. There are many layers in the building, and part of it is because we had to deal with an existing structure, which in itself was quite complex," says Diamanti, adding the design has incorporated accessibility including strategically-placed elevators, properly-sized and equipped washrooms and turning radii around chairs and shelving.

"Of course, we (the library) are also embracing the theatre, so it's not a straight rectangle; more like a horseshoe shape. So you'll see that the spaces are very interesting and quite different from a box, which, to my mind, makes it far more charming," she says.

Chamberlain Architect Services has used the historic church, which is the Gallery space, as the centre-piece, integrating its Old World design into a contemporary design that blends in both scale and style with the surrounding residential homes.

The cement bunker staircase/ramp entrance on Church St. has been removed and replaced with a visually stunning (outside and inside) atrium with street-level access. Outside, a tall old-growth tree will shade a walled courtyard with benches, which will serve as an outdoor reading area as well as for outdoor programming.

The building itself will be "sophisticated" and "green" with the Town striving to achieve a silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification standard. That includes a

green roof deck, geothermal heating and cooling, low flow water fixtures and daylight sensor lighting. Just recently the new Acton Library, also designed by Chamberlain Architect Services, attained a gold LEED certification.

Once inside the atrium, visitors have a choice of using the staircase or the elevator (accessible for wheelchairs and moms with strollers) to head to the upper floor that's shared by the Library and Cultural Centre.

The atrium, with its mezzanine will provide a wide-open mingling space during theatre intermissions and could also serve as an area for staging events and programs. It will also relieve the people congestion that happened when programs and performances overlapped. Larger washrooms and a theatre bar are on the bottom level of the atrium space.

The Gallery, because of its heritage features, remains relatively the same.

The John Elliott Theatre will get two sets of double doors to allow better patron flow and to prevent light flooding into the theatre, says Smith. Inside the theatre, there will be new seats, stage surface and new stage rigging as the result of Trillium Community Capital Fund grants obtained by the Town and Georgetown Little Theatre.

Smith says the theatre is on the same footprint, with a bit more back space and wing

space. For example, performers will also be able to access the front and back of the theatre through a side hallway, rather than through the Library. Theatre sets will arrive through a new loading bay with a driveway accessed from Main St. Dressing rooms, including an additional one, are getting a fair amount work done on them as well, Smith says.

The Cultural Centre and Library has integrated its Box Office and Main Circulation Desk with library staff now selling tickets. The library will also offer self-check-outs.

Passing through the circulation area, patrons enter the children services area, flooded with light due to the floor-to-ceiling windows.

The area will suit the needs of ages from infants to tweens, with colourful contemporary colours of purple, lime, orange and cherry and child-sized seating. At one end, will be an enclosed sound-proof space for programming for early readers, while at the other end will be the tween space including stations with educational games and sprawl chairs.

Down a grand staircase (or elevator) is the large wrap-around adult space, enclosed in glass teen space, double the number of computer stations, and local history study area with archives. Also on this level are small offices for local community groups and a large community room.

"I see the library as a place for collabora-

To view a photo gallery visit www.theifp.ca and click on 'photos'



Above: Chief librarian Jane Diamanti in the west facing area of the library. **Below left:** The future children services area.

Photos by Ted Brown

tion and creation where people can come together and work on projects together, use the resources of the library," says Diamanti. "Books will always be there ... but we'll have the electronics (such as computers, ereaders) and we'll help people manage the new technology. ... It really will be a community hub."

Another half level down is the seniors area with comfortable seating and a three-sided fireplace.

The area also includes a beverage station for patrons. There are also quiet study rooms and a listening room for people who want to watch a video or listen to music.

On the top and middle levels are the administrative offices, lounge, plus shower, kitchenette, and roof deck with green roof for the 50-plus staff members. The library gets its own loading dock for its deliveries off Market St. where the technical services staff is located.

More than a year of thought has gone into the design with ongoing revisions, she adds, with visits to 19 other libraries. The staff was fully involved all the way along at a representational committee.

In 2011 Halton Hills Public Library's branches saw a total of 209,000 visitors and circulated 495,874 items.

Those numbers are expected to jump when the new branch opens.



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*In celebration of their love
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Nickolaos Toris
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