



The Seattle Public Library

2025 Operations Plan

The Seattle Public Library's 2025 Operations Plan describes the first year of planned activity inside the City of Seattle's biennial 2025-2026 budget cycle and the sixth year of a seven-year, voter-approved, \$219.1 million Library Levy. This plan summarizes planned spending information under the City's 2025 Adopted Budget (General Fund, Library Levy, Library-generated revenue, Real Estate Excise Tax), in addition to private funding resources from Library gift funds and grant awards provided by The Seattle Public Library Foundation and other entities. The Library Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring Library funds appropriated through the City's budget.

The Library Board Policy on Race and Social Justice and the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative—a commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity—help guide the use of these funds and all aspects of Library operations.

I. Overview

2025 Operations Plan Relative to the Adopted 2024 Budget

To provide a comprehensive picture of the Library's 2025 planned spending, the Operations Plan includes both Operating and Capital budgets. The 2025 Library budget across all funding sources—including private gift and grant support—is **\$115.8 million**. This amount is **\$13.6 million** higher than the prior year (a **13%** increase). This net increase is largely due to finalization of a new collective bargaining agreement, in addition to variation in the 2025 Capital Budget—nearly all of which is in accordance with the long-term capital financial plan. Some of the high-level changes to the Library's 2025 budget are as follows (summarized view of year-to-year changes provided as Attachments 1 and 2):

Operating Budget Changes

- Continuation of a **\$1.7 million reduction** in General Fund support associated with COVID-19 era budget balancing determinations
- Deployment of **\$1.9 million in prior-period accumulated levy fund balance** that will allow the organization to stave off service level reductions (This use of one-time funds masks a sizeable structural deficit in the Library budget that we must address during the following biennium.)
- **\$420,000 in total non-labor reductions**, which includes cuts to Information Technology (\$100,000) and the books and materials collection (\$320,000)
- **Reduction of \$390,000** to be managed by holding positions vacant for an extended period
- **\$1,000,000 in additional gifts and grants** from The Seattle Public Library Foundation and other private sources for collections, programming, early learning, organizational equity advancement, and bolstering system-wide security

- Adjustments to **Central Costs, annual wage increases, benefit rate changes, health care, and other inflationary changes added \$10.4 million** in operating resources (These resources are largely dedicated to designated cost pools and do not carry programmatic flexibility.)

Capital Budget Changes

- **Library Levy capital support increased by \$2.1 million** (This is in accordance with the long-term capital plan as the budget included one-time increases to account for seismic retrofit and unreinforced masonry project costs.)
- **REET capital project support increased by \$308,000** (This increase is in accordance with the City’s long-term capital financial plan.)

2025-2026 City Council Budget Actions

City Councilmember Tanya Woo included an amendment to restore \$30,000 of what would have otherwise been a cut to the Library’s books and materials collection (decreasing the 2025 reduction from \$350,000 to \$320,000). This one-time restoration will be used to prevent cuts to magazine and newspaper subscriptions, and reference books.

Economy and Revenue¹

Despite the Federal Reserve keeping interest rates high, the national economy showed notable resilience and growth in the first half of 2024. Since then, the labor market has cooled, with Seattle’s employment growth, unfortunately, trailing the nation. The regional forecast projects growth of only 0.7% in 2024, down from 1.9% expected in the spring. Most of the uncertainty and downside economic risks for our region are tied to the path of the labor market, rather than inflation. Employment growth in Seattle has been mixed with gains in some sectors largely offset by declines in the tech and information sectors. Additionally, the City continues to struggle with reduced demand for office space and elevated vacancy rates, which are affecting economic and revenue growth in the City. However, like the nation, the regional economy is still likely to avoid a recession as there is currently no expectation of overall net job loss and employment is expected to grow modestly even as hiring slows.

Going into 2025, the City’s General Fund projected a deficit of \$251 million, or about a 15% shortfall. This deficit was due to a number of factors, including General Fund revenues growing slower than the rate of growth for general government costs, the end of significant one-time federal COVID relief grants, and a plan to begin using all of the Payroll Expense Tax revenues to pay only for restricted purposes, rather than general government. As part of the City’s budget development process, there were structural changes proposed to the payroll tax to allow the city to use these revenues more flexibly in the future, however reductions to spending, including targeted layoffs of some City employees were required.

While the Library was required to absorb a General Fund reduction of \$2.71 million, we were fortunate to be able to avoid a reduction in force and the elimination of positions.

¹ Information contained in this section is drawn from the 2025 Budget Book as proposed by the Mayor to the Seattle City Council.

II. Strategic Plan

This year's Operations Plan is notably informed by the Seattle Public Library 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. The plan provides a vision for the next 10 years by both maintaining a focus on core Library services and creating opportunities to expand our role serving the city. The plan seeks to leverage the Library's expertise in providing information services to our community. It looks to build out our programs and collections to increase community literacy, empowerment and enrichment. The plan acknowledges the many challenges we face now and in the coming years, including constrained fiscal resources, rapid technological change, and stressed systems critical to supporting community health, but orients the Library to navigate those obstacles rather than succumb to them.

The 2025 Operations plan incorporates elements of the Strategic Plan into its conventional format—a structure closely aligned with the investment areas and promises established in the 2019 Library Levy. Both will inform the development of the levy renewal proposal for consideration in 2026.

With a service focus on **literacy, empowerment and enrichment**, we intend to create programs, services, collections and spaces that build a greater sense of **community belonging**.

With an organizational focus on **capacity building, facilities improvement, technology innovation and sustainability**, we intend to make the Library a more **resilient organization** to best serve the people of Seattle.

The future we envision builds on our existing strengths, including our world-class staff, buildings, collections, programs and services. It reinforces and expands the importance of relationships and connection. It also requires us to change and grow, building new skillsets, such as emerging technology knowledge or new language skills. It will require us to evaluate and adjust our hiring, training and retention strategies.

As we look toward our future, we believe the Library must:

- Prioritize equity in our actions, services and outcomes.
- Continue and expand free access to books and information.
- Increase access, including for those with limited English proficiency.
- Develop more community programming that improves people's lives.
- Serve as a community hub and connector.
- Create and facilitate positive change.
- Listen to and reflect diverse voices and viewpoints.
- Commit to putting people first.

III. Priority Areas within Library Operations

A. Hours and Access

Library open hours mean access to technology, collections and resources, programs and knowledgeable staff for information and referral. To this end, Public Services staff are versed in the role the Library plays in creating a more equitable community with increased opportunity for low income and historically marginalized individuals and families in Seattle. The Library's largest

expenditure is related to personnel, representing \$83 million, or 72% of total Library resources. Two of the Library’s key investments in this area are:

+\$89,000 to create designated branch programming funds. These resources will help support regional programming, along with an integration with other programming support by the Equity, Learning, and Engagement Services team. This is in alignment with the service focus of **Empowerment** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. *(Private Funds)*

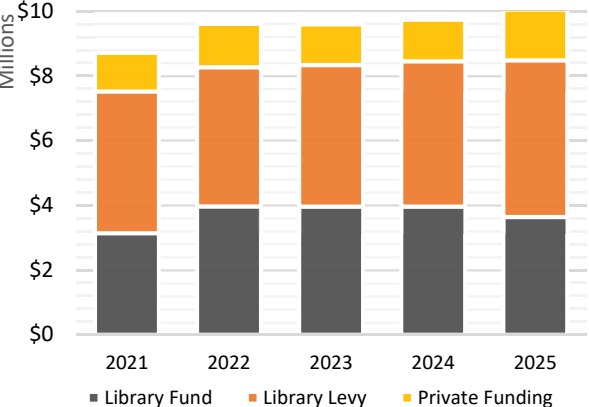
+\$312,000 to hire 3.0 FTE Library Security Officers to improve response time to issues system-wide and develop a more cohesive approach to provide security and safety services at our locations. This is in alignment with the organizational focus of **Facilities Improvement** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. *(Private Funds)*

B. Books and Materials

When considering the purchase of materials to be added to the collection, the Collection Services team applies an equity lens that factors in audiences, categories and formats, while also focusing acquisitions on titles that reflect underrepresented voices, including those from people of color, the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups. Circulation trends have rebounded, and over 1 million items are circulated per month.

The Library provides \$10.3 million to support the purchase of books and materials, with an additional \$647,000 used to support the processing and acquisition costs of those materials. These resources are provided via a combination of General Fund, Library Levy and private gifts (a summary of which can be seen in Figure 1). Of note, this section does not include circulating patron Wi-Fi hot spots—which are categorized as “Technology”. Important changes to the 2025 books and materials budget include:

Figure 1: Materials Budget by Funding Source



+\$47,000 to supplement our Special Collections, which includes increased acquisition of materials in addition to digital asset management capabilities. This is in alignment with the service focus of **Enrichment** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. *(Private Funds)*

+\$10,000 in one-time funding to add decodable readers to the collection for school support—collection to be maintained using baseline operating funds. Decodable books are written for the beginning reader and encourage children to sound out words using decoding strategies, rather than guessing from pictures or predicting from other cues. This is in alignment with the service focus of **Enrichment** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. *(Private Funds)*

-\$320,000 reduction that will impact databases available for patron use, begin a phased retirement of the CD format, in addition to cuts across DVDs, Blu-Rays, and adult fiction and non-fiction print and audio materials. Of note, \$30,000 of an initial \$350,000 cut was restored by City Council for 2025 only. *(General Fund)*

C. Technology and Online Services

The digital environment provides increasing opportunities to participate in the information society, although some individuals and families can face serious barriers to access. These barriers, often referred to as the “digital divide,” may include a lack of affordable internet connectivity; lack of internet ready devices; or a lack of skills, knowledge, or means to access digital resources. The Library plays an important role in helping bridge the digital divide by providing access to patrons who lack this capability at home.

According to a survey conducted by the Library, one-third of Seattle residents said they relied on Library computers or Wi-Fi networks to access the internet and other digital resources. The Library provides free access to digital devices (desktop computers, laptops and tablets) that can be used to search online resources, connect to the internet, or use popular software. Our wireless internet access is provided free to patrons and has experienced exponential growth as patron preferences shift toward mobile access. Additionally, patrons can use their Library card to check out a portable Wi-Fi hot spot. Important changes in this area for 2025 include:

+\$184,000 for a 1.0 FTE Cybersecurity Analyst. In response to the 2024 cyberattack, the Library is increasing investments related to cybersecurity—a key step of which is to hire a new staff member dedicated to the development, deployment, and monitoring of a cybersecurity program intended to identify and address threats and vulnerabilities. This is in alignment with the organizational focus of **Technology Innovation** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. (*Private Funds*)

-\$100,000 reduction that will impact staff and public computer replacements, elimination of email notification software, and general reductions across other IT infrastructure including cabling, meeting room carts, among others. (*General Fund*)

D. Literacy and Early Learning

Libraries play an important role in fostering literacy, particularly for those who have historically faced barriers to access, such as immigrants and refugees, and those developing literacy skills, such as preschool and elementary students. A key investment in this priority area for 2025:

\$290,000 for the continuation of Kaleidoscope Play and Learn programming. This enrichment program is designed for ages birth through 5, with sessions beginning with one hour of child-led free play—activities can include building, arts and crafts, pretend play, and more. Free play is followed by songs, stories, group sensory activities, as well as well resource sharing. This is in alignment with the service focus of **Literacy** included as part of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. (*Library Levy*)

E. Building and Facility Support

As part of the 1998 Library’s for All capital campaign, the Library remodeled and replaced a number of our branches. Many of these renovations and buildings are now over 20 years old and in need of ongoing and careful oversight and maintenance to protect the public investment. The Library utilizes an internally developed and actively managed Comprehensive Facilities Plan to surface and direct where investments are needed throughout the system. However, resulting from

budget reductions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, several building maintenance projects were deferred to future periods. This is not an optimal approach, as timely and ongoing maintenance is less expensive than emergency repairs and replacements—this is particularly salient when considering the iconic and unique buildings present in the Library property portfolio.

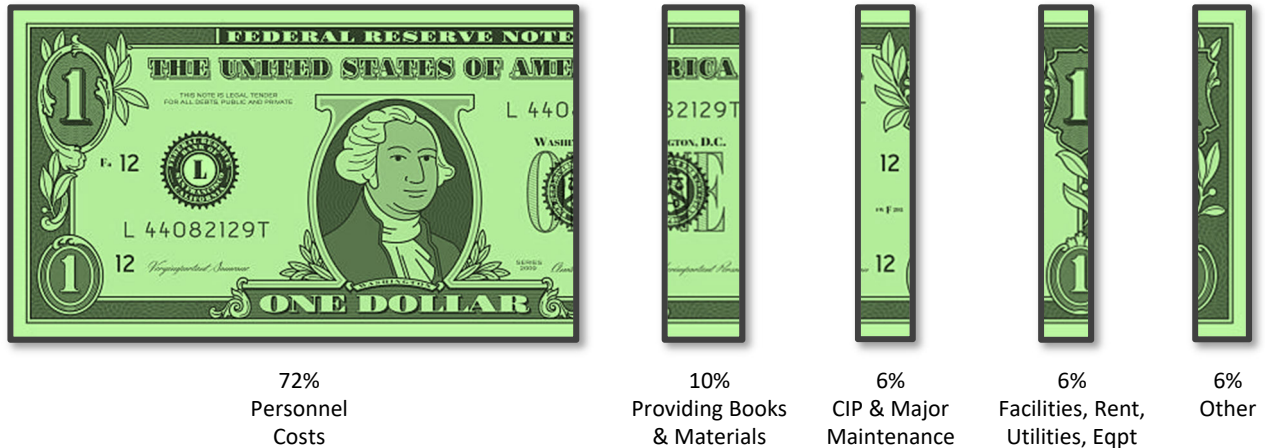
Our buildings provide a forum where patrons can read or study in a comfortable environment, listen to interesting and engaging speakers, participate in meaningful community events, or find daytime respite. \$6.8 million, or 6% of Library resources, support keeping our facilities open, clean, functional, and welcoming to all. An additional \$7.3 million is provided as part of the Library's Capital Improvement Program, which helps ensure our facilities remain in good structural condition and for our buildings to continue to exist for future generations.

A keystone project related to our building portfolio in the coming year is the University Branch Library unreinforced masonry capital project. Planned renovations for the University Branch Library will advance City and Library goals around sustainability, climate readiness, community access, and cultural enrichment. New electric heat pumps and energy recovery ventilators will improve the facility's ability to provide patrons respite during heat and smoke events. They will efficiently meet the potential enhanced ventilation needs associated with future pandemics. Solar panels will reduce the library's energy footprint. ADA improvements including an elevator and site landscaping will make the library fully accessible, including staff areas. Seismic reinforcement with careful attention to preserving historic features will assure that the legacy of Carnegie library endowments is conserved for future generations.

IV. Operations Plan Overview by Personnel, Collections, and Buildings

There is an overarching and larger scale framework within which our priority areas fall, these consist of: 1) Personnel, 2) Books and Materials, and 3) Buildings. Relative investments of Library resources among these categories are shown below, along with an illustration of how \$1.00 is spent at the Library using this lens. Due to the unique nature of Library services and how they are provided to the public, Library work is inherently people-oriented—meaning the majority of our resources are dedicated toward personnel. Additional department level budget information can be seen on Attachment 1.

Figure 2: How \$1.00 is spent at the Library and the Proposed Budget

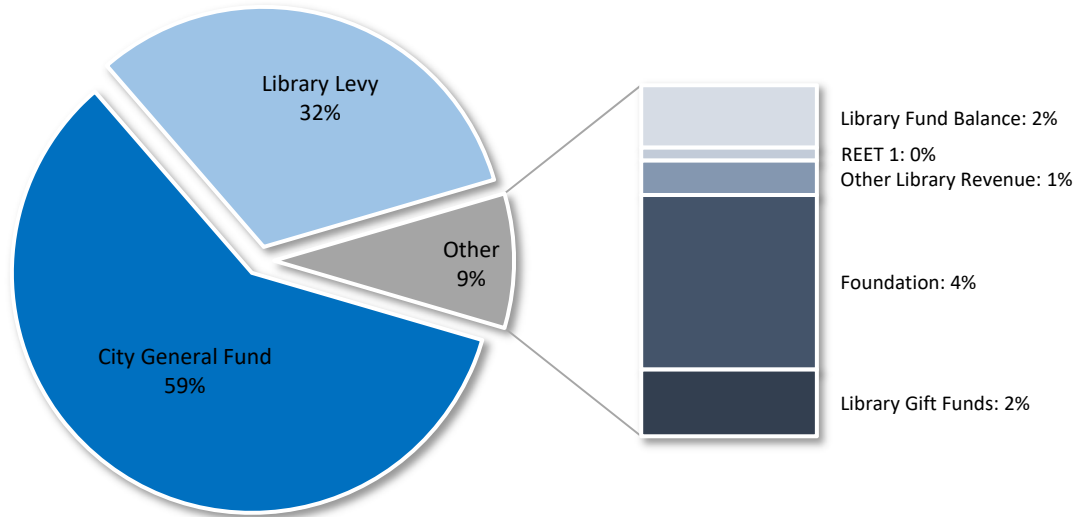


Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Proposed	%
<i>Personnel</i>		
Public Services, Collections & Access	\$59,917	52%
All Other Departments	\$22,852	20%
<i>Personnel Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$82,769</i>	<i>72%</i>
<i>Providing Books & Materials</i>		
Books & Materials Collection	\$10,764	9%
Collection Processing	\$647	1%
<i>Providing Books & Materials Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$11,411</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Buildings</i>		
Capital Improvements & Major Maintenance	\$7,282	6%
Utilities, Maintenance, Rent, Equipment	\$6,798	6%
<i>Other</i>		
Direct Programming Supplies	\$1,750	1%
City Central Costs	\$3,309	3%
Software	\$892	1%
Other	\$1,614	1%
<i>Other Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$7,565</i>	<i>6%</i>
Total	\$115,825	

V. Operations Plan Overview by Funding Source

The design and development of the Library budget occurs against a backdrop of equity impacts associated with the City’s Language Access Plan (Library plan included as Attachment 3), as well as the City’s Race and Social Justice Ordinance and the Library Board policy on Race and Social Justice (Attachment 4). Library operations are supported by three main funding sources: City appropriation of General Fund support, an annual allocation from the seven-year, voter-approved Library Levy, and private gift funds—which include annual grants from The Seattle Public Library Foundation.

Figure 3: Operations Plan by Funding Source



Amounts in \$1,000s	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change
<i>Operating Fund</i>			
City General Fund (Operating)	\$62,236	\$68,480	10%
2019 Library Levy (Operating)	\$25,194	\$28,894	15%
Other Library Revenue	\$778	\$835	7%
Interdepartmental Support	\$27	\$27	0%
Interfund Transfer	\$0	\$166	100%
Use of Library Fund Balance	\$1,859	\$1,859	0%
<i>Operating Fund Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$90,094</i>	<i>\$100,261</i>	<i>11%</i>
<i>CIP</i>			
2019 Library Levy (CIP)	\$5,859	\$7,989	36%
REET I (CIP)	\$78	\$386	395%
<i>CIP Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$5,937</i>	<i>\$8,375</i>	<i>41%</i>
<i>Gifts and Grants</i>			
Seattle Public Library Foundation*	\$4,672	\$5,200	11%
Gift Funds (Balch, Bunn, other)	\$1,490	\$1,990	34%
<i>Gifts and Grants Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$6,162</i>	<i>\$7,190</i>	<i>17%</i>
Total	\$102,193	\$115,825	13%

* Grant awards approved by The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board of Directors

A. General Fund

With **59%** of the budget provided by this resource, the Library’s financial well-being and our ability to deliver services to the public is closely tied to the performance of the local and national economy. Revenues forecast to be collected as part of the City’s 2025 General Fund are insufficient to cover all anticipated City-wide costs, resulting in difficult asks being made of departments as part of the biennial budgeting process—the Library in particular needed to absorb a reduction of \$2.71 million in General Fund support. In developing the requested reduction scenarios, the Library’s goals were to keep promises made to Seattle voters as part of the 2019 Library Levy, minimize layoffs, retain capacity to make progress in implementing the Library’s strategic plan, and continue to deliver on partnerships and programming to our service communities. The following modifications were made relating to General Fund resources:

- \$1,900,000** associated with existing costs that will be funded via one-time use of accumulated fund balance instead
- \$320,000** to reduce the books and materials budget
- \$100,000** to reduce the IT budget
- \$390,000** in funding to be recaptured via increased savings from holding positions vacant for extended periods

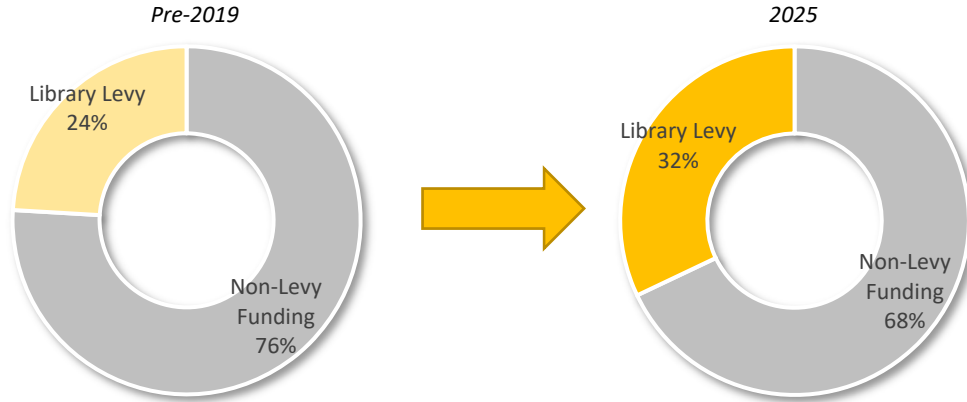
While the 2025 budget includes **\$68.5 million in General Fund resources**, which represents a 10% increase over the prior year, the Library did not receive inflationary adjustments beyond those associated with wage increases stemming from adoption of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, benefit rate increases, and City Central Cost changes. Of note, Central Costs represent services provided by the City to departments, who are then billed for those services. In terms of the Library budget, there is a commensurate adjustment to offset central costs and the budget—resulting a net effect of zero from an available dollars perspective.

Amounts in \$1,000s	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$28,796	\$31,902	10%
Providing Books & Materials	\$13,425	\$14,449	7%
Technology & Online Services	\$4,358	\$4,878	11%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$560	\$616	9%
Building & Facility Support	\$7,516	\$8,484	11%
Administration	\$4,817	\$5,232	8%
City Central Costs	\$2,764	\$2,919	5%
Total	\$62,236	\$68,480	10%

B. 2019 Library Levy

In August 2019, Seattle voters approved a seven-year, \$219.1 million 2019 Library Levy renewal to support, maintain, and expand core Library services, renewing a \$122 million Library Levy that was first passed in 2012. With the passage of the 2019 Library Levy, the Library increased our dependence on time-limited voter-approved funding. Across both operating and capital budgets, **the levy will provide \$36.9 million in 2025, which is 32% of the Library’s total budget** (up from 24% pre-2019 Library Levy—Figure 4 on next page).

Figure 4: Pre-2019 Library Levy Budget % Compared to Current-Year Budget %



Each year, the Library Board of Trustees allocates available levy funds through the Operations Plan. More information on 2019 Library Levy categories, including how they map back to the budget can be found on Attachment 5.

Amounts in \$1,000s	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$13,692	\$16,450	20%
Providing Books & Materials	\$5,931	\$6,412	8%
Technology & Online Services	\$2,670	\$2,821	6%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$381	\$454	19%
Building & Facility Support	\$1,947	\$2,034	4%
Major Maintenance (CIP)	\$5,244	\$7,989	52%
Major Maintenance (IT)	\$615	\$0	-100%
Administration	\$573	\$723	26%
Total	\$31,053	\$36,883	19%

Levy – Operating Fund

In 2025, the Library continues to fulfill levy commitments. The Library will be scheduled to open 21 more hours per week than before the start of the 2019 levy. Air conditioned public spaces have become an increasingly important community need throughout the city as summer temperatures climb, wildfire smoke becomes more prevalent, and many lack air conditioning in their homes. With the recent installation of air-conditioning at Northeast, Southwest, and Green Lake branches and upgrades to air-conditioning at Broadview, Capitol Hill and NewHolly branches, unscheduled closures due to excessive heat in the summer should be reduced. In 2025, we will continue to offer seven weekly play and learn groups, exceeding our levy commitment to fund up to six groups. We will also continue to offer social service support to at-risk youth through our community resource specialist program. Our Social Service Team has leveraged resources in branches and in the community to provide a robust array of services to our patrons.

2025 brings expanded City-wide Central Costs allocations to the Library Levy—until 2024, these costs were funded by the General Fund, but represent expenditures associated with City IT, labor relations, payroll, financial system licensing, and other forms of centralized support. Other highlights of levy funding for 2025 include fine-free access to the books and materials collection,

investment in e-materials and our no-holds no-wait Peak Picks collection, digital equity through the Wi-Fi hot spot program, and enhanced levels of building maintenance and branch security.

Levy – Capital Improvement Program

The levy continues to provide capital funding for the Library’s major maintenance program, performing critical maintenance to ensure the Library’s 28 facilities (Central Library, 26 neighborhood branches, and a Maintenance Operations Center) are in good repair and preserved for future generations. The focus for 2025 projects will continue to be mechanical systems replacement, repair and electrification of branch libraries—with emphasis on FEMA grant locations (University, Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne and West Seattle). Those branches were prioritized based on immediate maintenance needs, air-conditioning status, years since last remodel, and proximity to other locations.

Of the Library’s 26 neighborhood branches, seven are Carnegie-era branches that are considered historic city and state landmarks. These branches—Douglass-Truth, Columbia, Fremont, Green Lake, University, Queen Anne and West Seattle—are unreinforced masonry buildings, which means the buildings are at an increased risk for damage during a seismic event. The current seven-year levy, passed by voters in 2019, included planned funding for seismic retrofits at the three of the most vulnerable branches: Green Lake, University and Columbia. In 2024, the Green Lake retrofit (including electrification, HVAC upgrades, accessibility improvements and interior remodel) was completed. The 2025 budget includes levy funding for the University branch seismic retrofit project, which will commence construction early in the year. The 2025 capital project plan is included as Attachment 6.

C. Other Capital Improvement Program Support

Capital improvement projects may carry large fund balances as timelines shift and are influenced by external factors, project complexity, supply chain disruptions and materials shortages (more likely with historically-landmarked buildings), and the availability of qualified contractors in a competitive local construction market (also often related to historically-landmarked buildings). Projects require ample planning and are often multi-year in nature—as a result, the Library may have carryforward resources that span multiple fiscal years. A long-term capital improvement program is submitted to the City Budget Office each year and is included as Attachment 7.

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) – Capital Improvement Program

The 2025 Operations Plan includes a total of \$386,000 in REET funding, which is tax revenue generated from property sales in Seattle. The total \$386,000 is dedicated to construction costs associated with the University branch seismic retrofit project (which includes upgrades to, and electrification of, the branch’s mechanical and HVAC systems).

D. The Seattle Public Library Foundation

The Seattle Public Library Foundation helps the Library equitably enhance its collections, offer activities for all ages, pilot new and innovative initiatives, and enrich our program of service for our community. It supports the Library by securing and managing donations from individuals, businesses and other foundations to enhance levels of Library service beyond what public funding

alone is able to provide. The Foundation’s goal is to expand the reach of the Library, not to supplant funding for core Library operations. The Library submits grant requests and provides support where needed, however the final award amount, as well as the efforts funded, is at the discretion of The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board of Directors.

Amounts in \$1,000s	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$1,322	\$1,341	1%
Providing Books & Materials	\$1,735	\$2,056	16%
Technology & Online Services	\$428	\$490	12%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$698	\$779	11%
Major Maintenance (CIP)	\$210	\$215	2%
Administration	\$279	\$319	13%
Total	\$4,672	\$5,200	11%

E. Library Gift Funds

The Library receives investment earnings from two main funds, the Robert C. Bunn Trust and the Albert S. Balch Trust, which enhance Library services and support new initiatives. There are also designated contributions made to the Library that must be spent in accordance with donor restrictions. The allocation and approval for spending authority of Library gift funds occurs as part of the Operations Plan. Detail on items funded for 2025 can be found on Attachment 8.

F. Library Enterprise Revenues

The Library has limited opportunities for revenue generation, with said resources used to support core operations. Library enterprise revenues have been on a slow path to recovery, with 2025 projected to mark the first year where revenues exceed their pre-pandemic levels. However, this does not account for lost revenue growth in the interceding periods, nor does it account for the lost purchasing power of these dollars due to high inflation over this span. These funding sources provide **approximately 1% of the Library’s 2025 budget.**

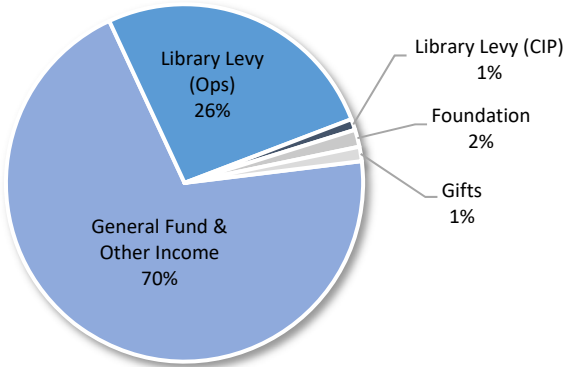
Amounts in \$1,000s	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change
Lost Material Fees	\$115	\$120	4%
Central Library Parking Garage Fees	\$345	\$377	8%
Copy Services/Pay for Print	\$95	\$100	5%
Space Rental	\$162	\$177	9%
Consignment Fees	\$85	\$85	0%
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$3	\$3	0%
Interfund Transfer	\$0	\$166	100%
Total	\$805	\$1,028	22%

VI. Staffing Levels by Funding Source

The 2025 Library budget contains **701 positions (611.2 FTE)**—funded via multiple sources (Figure 5).

Figure 5: FTE by Funding Source

	2024 FTE	2025 FTE	% Change
General Fund & Other Income	439.1	428.0	-3%
Library Levy (Operations)	146.7	159.6	8%
Library Levy (CIP)	6.2	6.1	-1%
Foundation	9.7	9.5	-2%
Gift Funds (Bunn & Balch)	6.4	8.0	21%
Total	608.1	611.2	1%



A. Vacancies

As Library employees leave for reasons such as retirement or in search of other opportunities, their position will go unfilled for a period of time. In the simplest of terms, the period when a position is unfilled represents labor cost savings. Assuming full employment for an entire year is unrealistic; as such, salary savings assumptions are built into the budget by forecasting an organization-level vacancy rate.

To balance the budget for 2025, the Library was required to increase our target vacancy savings rate in order to recoup \$390,000 in excess savings in 2025. This will manifest as increases to the length of time the Library will need to hold positions vacant—although prioritization for positions imperative to delivering stabilized hours and maintaining minimum staffing levels will occur. **A 5% salary savings assumption is included** as part of the 2025 budget. The Library Financial Services team will closely monitor actual savings and expenditures to ensure appropriation authority is not over-expended.

B. Accrued Vacation and Sick Leave Payouts for Retirement & Other Separations

Staff turnover due to cyclical separations jumped in 2021; however, 2022 and 2023 have represented a return to pre-pandemic averages. While staff retirements remained relatively steady, the ranks of Library employees reaching retirement age, but who have yet to announce their retirement, are significant. As of October 2024, The Library had **149 employees eligible for retirement** (compared to 128 employees in November 2023), with an estimated liability of **\$1.9 million** (compared to \$1.4 million in November 2023).

While the Library has been able to manage payouts within our annual appropriation (via agency-wide vacancy savings), this approach is not a guarantee of sufficient resources regarding the future liability. Library separation and retirement payouts over the past three years are as follows:

	2021		2022		2023	
	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount
Separation Payouts	61	\$191,000	33	\$137,000	37	\$133,000
Retirement Payouts	15	\$207,000	12	\$151,000	17	\$201,000
Total	76	\$398,000	45	\$288,234	54	\$334,000

VII. Future Risks

In any given year, the Library is faced with risks that can impact our operations in a multitude of ways. Some of these potential risks have been analyzed as part of the Operations Plan and are covered in the proceeding parts of this section.

A. Pressures of social issues on staff and safety/security in our buildings

The Library serves a critical role in providing daytime respite and engagement for people who are insecurely housed, unemployed, or out of school. Keeping libraries safe and clean ensures everyone in the city has a welcoming and attractive place to learn, to access the internet, search for a job, and connect with friends and family, or to simply be. However, providing open access also brings the challenges our community faces outside of our doors, including mental health struggles, addiction issues, crime, violence, and insecure housing conditions. These impacts are also felt by the general public who may feel unsafe when such incidents and disruptions occur.

These socio-economic challenges have introduced severe pressures on the Library and Library staff. If this trend continues, the Library faces serious risks. We will need to hire additional security officers and to evolve staffing models, assuring more public services staff onsite to manage an increasingly complex environment.

B. Aging building portfolio

Library buildings are among the most intensively-used City facilities in Seattle. Prior to the pandemic, the Central Library hosted over 1.2 million visitors annually, with library branches serving over 3.6 million visitors. The Library's historic landmark buildings have unique features such as brick facades, slate roofs and other details. When undertaking maintenance and repair work, it is essential to use designs and materials consistent with their landmark status—all factors that increase major maintenance costs.

The Central Library is entering its third decade of service during 2025, and its systems are aging. A building of the Central Library's size, complexity, and intensity of use requires significant annual maintenance to preserve core functionality and continually improve building efficiency. Updating Central's mechanical and HVAC systems to align with current City policy (including the Mayoral order to eliminate fossil fuels) and lessen its carbon footprint will require significant funding beyond the annual Levy major maintenance allocation.

C. Mid-year cut to the General Fund budget

While the City Budget Office has not requested a mid-year underspend target since 2020, pre-pandemic mid-year budget reduction targets were a relatively frequent occurrence. Taking into account uncertainty regarding economic recovery, the possibility of the City requesting a mid-year budget reduction is important to note. The organization will closely monitor resources and spending moving into 2025 in consideration of this risk.

VIII. Closing Summary

Recovery from the cybersecurity event will continue to take shape in 2025, with the Library also looking to shore up consistency of service as it relates to access for our patrons. The Library Levy provides necessary resources to provide ongoing Library programs and services, and although the current Library Levy is set to end in 2026, the strategic planning on how to approach this is already well underway. Considering other large-scale projects on the Library's horizon, it will be critical to work collaboratively with City leadership to develop a plan for sustainable funding longer term.

Attachments

1	2025 Operations Plan compared to 2024 Adopted Budget
2	Key Changes in 2025 relative to 2024 Adopted Budget
3	Library Language Access Plan
4	Library Board Race and Social Justice Policy
5	2019 Library Levy Categories & Budget Cross-walk
6	2025 Capital Improvement Projects
7	Long-Term Capital Improvement Program Plan
8	Library Gift Fund Project Listing

Attachment 1

2025 Operations Plan Compared to 2024 Adopted

LIBRARY FUND & LIBRARY LEVY OPERATING

	2024 Adopted	FTE	2025 Proposed	FTE	% Change	FTE Change
CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE	\$728,000	2.8	\$769,000	2.8	6%	0.0
INSTITUTIONAL & STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENT						
Institutional & Strategic Advancement Administration	234,000	1.0	265,000	1.0	13%	-
Communications	443,000	2.8	495,000	2.8	12%	-
Marketing and Online Services	1,258,000	7.2	1,373,000	7.2	9%	-
Institutional & Strategic Advancement Sub-Total	\$1,935,000	11.0	\$2,133,000	11.0	10%	0.0
HUMAN RESOURCES						
Human Resources	2,702,000	10.0	2,645,000	10.0	-2%	-
Health & Safety Services	161,000	1.0	178,000	1.0	11%	-
Human Resources Sub-Total	\$2,863,000	11.0	\$2,823,000	11.0	-1%	0.0
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES						
Admin Services Administration	409,000	2.2	1,605,000	2.2	292%	-
Financial Services	1,737,000	7.1	1,108,000	7.1	-36%	-
Facilities & Building Maintenance	8,704,000	54.0	9,777,000	54.0	12%	-
Security Services	2,531,000	21.0	2,918,000	21.0	15%	-
Information Technology	6,585,000	16.7	7,178,000	16.7	9%	0.1
Materials Distribution Services	2,163,000	15.9	2,427,000	16.5	12%	0.6
Administrative Services Sub-Total	\$22,129,000	116.8	\$25,013,000	117.4	13%	0.7
LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SERVICES						
LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SERVICES ADMINISTRATION						
Library Programs & Services Administration	1,273,000	5.9	1,389,000	5.9	9%	-
LPSD Operations	1,545,000	12.2	2,672,000	19.7	73%	7.5
Sub-Total	\$2,818,000	18.1	\$4,061,000	25.6	44%	7.5
COLLECTIONS & ACCESS						
Circulation Services	3,554,000	36.2	3,926,000	34.9	10%	(1.3)
Technical & Collection Services	13,598,000	35.1	14,369,000	34.8	6%	(0.3)
Special Collections	926,000	6.3	1,185,000	7.5	28%	1.2
Sub-Total	\$18,078,000	77.5	\$19,480,000	77.1	8%	(0.4)
PUBLIC SERVICES						
Branch & Central Library Operations	41,392,000	329.3	46,277,000	323.3	12%	(6.0)
Sub-Total	\$41,392,000	329.3	\$46,277,000	323.3	12%	(6.0)
EQUITY, LEARNING, & ENGAGEMENT SERVICES						
Community Engagement & Economic Development	1,278,000	8.9	1,405,000	8.9	10%	-
Lifelong Access	751,000	5.6	841,000	5.6	12%	-
Youth & Family Learning Services	982,000	5.0	1,096,000	5.0	12%	-
Sub-Total	\$3,011,000	19.5	\$3,342,000	19.5	11%	0.0
Library Programs & Services Sub-Total	\$65,299,000	444.4	\$73,160,000	445.5	12%	1.1
Projected Budget Savings	(\$2,860,000)		(\$3,640,000)			
LIBRARY FUND & LIBRARY LEVY OPERATING TOTAL	\$90,094,000	585.9	\$100,258,000	587.6	11%	1.8

Attachment 1 (cont.)

2025 Operations Plan Compared to 2024 Adopted

CIP, FOUNDATION, & GIFT FUNDS

	2024 Adopted	FTE	2025 Proposed	FTE	% Change	FTE Change
CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE	\$377,000	1.0	\$656,000	1.0	74%	0.0
INSTITUTIONAL & STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENT						
Communications	132,000	1.0	304,000	2.0	130%	1.0
Community Partnerships & Government Relations	102,000	1.0	117,000	1.0	15%	-
Marketing and Online Services	362,000	1.0	269,000	0.0	-26%	(1.0)
Institutional & Strategic Advancement Sub-Total	\$596,000	3.0	\$690,000	3.0	16%	0.0
HUMAN RESOURCES						
Human Resources	188,000	1.4	18,000	0.0	-90%	(1.4)
Human Resources Sub-Total	\$188,000	1.4	\$18,000	0.0	-90%	(1.4)
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES						
Admin Services Administration	225,000	0.1	267,000	0.1	19%	-
Financial Services	244,000	2.0	161,000	1.0	-34%	(1.0)
Security Services	-	-	300,000	3.0		3.0
Information Technology	711,000	0.4	327,000	1.3	-54%	1.0
Materials Distribution Services	25,000	-	27,000	-	8%	-
Capital Improvement Program	5,393,000	4.8	8,431,000	4.8	56%	-
Administrative Services Sub-Total	\$6,598,000	7.2	9,513,000	10.1	44%	3.0
LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SERVICES						
LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SERVICES ADMINISTRATION						
Library Programs & Services Administration	102,000	-	153,000	-	50%	-
Sub-Total	\$102,000	-	\$153,000	-	50%	0.0
COLLECTIONS & ACCESS						
Technical & Collection Services	1,284,000	-	1,560,000	-	21%	-
Special Collections	274,000	1.5	356,000	1.5	30%	-
Sub-Total	\$1,558,000	1.5	\$1,916,000	1.5	23%	0.0
PUBLIC SERVICES						
Branch & Central Library Operations	41,000	-	45,000	-	10%	-
Sub-Total	\$41,000	-	\$45,000	-	10%	0.0
EQUITY, LEARNING, & ENGAGEMENT SERVICES						
Community Engagement & Economic Development	1,382,000	4.0	1,281,000	4.0	-7%	-
Lifelong Access	280,000	2.2	294,000	2.0	5%	(0.2)
Youth & Family Learning Services	977,000	2.0	1,001,000	2.0	2%	-
Sub-Total	\$2,639,000	8.2	\$2,576,000	8.0	-2%	(0.2)
Library Programs & Services Sub-Total	\$4,340,000	9.7	\$4,690,000	9.5	8%	(0.2)
CIP, FOUNDATION & GIFT FUND TOTAL	\$12,099,000	22.2	\$15,567,000	23.6	29%	1.4

TOTAL LIBRARY OPERATIONS PLAN BUDGET

TOTAL LIBRARY OPERATIONS PLAN	\$102,193,000	608.1	\$115,825,000	611.2	13%	3.3
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Attachment 2

Key Operating Budget Changes in 2025 Relative to the 2024 Adopted Operations Plan

All changes detailed below account for a salary step increases of up to 5% for eligible employees. This also reflects technical changes are related to inflation, rate adjustments, and healthcare. Includes 2023 & 2024 AWI (approved mid-2024); 2025 AWI is TBD.

LIBRARY FUND & LIBRARY LEVY OPERATING

	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	Net Budget Change	% Chg	FTE Chg
CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE					
Technical Adjustments	728,000	769,000	41,000	6%	-
Chief Librarian's Office Sub-Total	\$728,000	\$769,000	\$41,000	6%	0.0
INSTITUTIONAL & STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENT					
Technical Adjustments	1,935,000	2,133,000	198,000	10%	-
Institutional & Strategic Advancement Sub-Total	\$1,935,000	\$2,133,000	\$198,000	10%	0.0
HUMAN RESOURCES					
Technical Adjustments	1,966,000	2,091,000	125,000	6%	-
City of Seattle Central Costs	897,000	732,000	(165,000)	-18%	-
Human Resources Sub-Total	\$2,863,000	\$2,823,000	(\$40,000)	-1%	0.0
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES					
Technical Adjustments	13,231,000	14,464,000	1,233,000	9%	0.7
IT transferred to Admin Services	5,192,000	5,864,000	672,000	13%	16.7
City Budget Reduction: IT	-	(100,000)	(100,000)	-100%	-
Materials Distribution transferred to Admin Services	2,163,000	2,427,000	264,000	12%	16.5
Event Services transferred to Library Programs & Services	(587,000)	(573,000)	14,000	-2%	(5.0)
City of Seattle Central Costs	737,000	1,174,000	437,000	59%	-
City of Seattle Central Costs - transferred to Admin Svc	1,393,000	1,757,000	364,000	26%	-
Administrative Services Sub-Total	\$22,129,000	\$25,013,000	\$2,884,000	13%	28.9
LIBRARY PROGRAMS & SERVICES					
Technical Adjustments	73,460,000	82,580,000	9,120,000	12%	1.1
City Budget Reduction: Books & Materials	-	(320,000)	(320,000)	-100%	-
2023-2026 CBA: Fixed Scheduling	-	275,000	275,000	100%	-
IT transferred to Admin Services	(5,192,000)	(5,764,000)	(572,000)	11%	(16.7)
Materials Distribution transferred to Admin Services	(2,163,000)	(2,427,000)	(264,000)	12%	(16.5)
Event Services transferred to Library Programs & Services	587,000	573,000	(14,000)	-2%	5.0
City of Seattle Central Costs - transferred to Admin Svc	(1,393,000)	(1,757,000)	(364,000)	26%	-
Library Programs & Services Sub-Total	\$65,299,000	\$73,160,000	\$7,861,000	12%	(27.1)
Vacancy Savings	(\$2,860,000)	(\$3,640,000)			
LIBRARY FUND & LIBRARY LEVY OPERATING TOTAL	\$90,094,000	\$100,258,000	\$10,164,000	11%	1.8

Attachment 3

Library Language Access Plan Summary

Mission

The mission of the Seattle Public Library is to bring people, information and ideas together to enrich lives and build community.

Language Access Plan

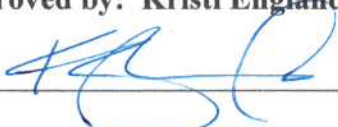
The Library provides the following as needed for patrons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP):

- The Library employs a significant number of public facing staff who speak languages beyond English, with an emphasis on neighborhoods with higher populations of LEP patrons
- The Library's World Languages unit provides print materials (books, magazines and newspapers) in 44 languages. It also has dedicated librarians in the World Languages department who can assist with translation and interpretation in Chinese, Russian and Spanish.
- Library staff access to Language Line when serving LEP patrons in person or over the phone
- When working with program managers, our marketing team uses a strategic framework to help evaluate language needs for the intended audience and how to best meet those needs with translation or original creation in each language. Considerations in addition to audience needs include the Library's ability to deliver service in other languages, project timelines, and content complexity and longevity.
- The Library regularly offers programs and services in four of the seven Tier 1 languages identified by OIRA: Chinese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. These offerings are supported by staff who speak these languages natively, community members, or both.



The Seattle Public Library

Board Policy

RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	Adopted by the Library Board Jan. 27, 2018
Owner: Executive Director and Chief Librarian	
Approved by: Kristi England, Library Board President 	

BACKGROUND

The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is the City of Seattle’s longstanding commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle. This important effort recognizes that ending institutional racism involves more than simply developing programs to help people of color. The initiative works to address biases built into institutions and society, and end the underlying structural racism that perpetuates racial and social inequities.

In response to this initiative and its importance in the Library’s particular work, the Board of Trustees of The Seattle Public Library (SPL) has committed itself to addressing the Library’s role for doing the same in and through its programs, services and staff. To best serve the public and assist staff, the board has created an enhanced, Library-specific Race and Social Justice Policy to support this mission and the Library’s work.

This policy provides guidance to Library staff to underscore the organization’s ongoing RSJI efforts, support staff understanding, guide the use of resources, and highlight the Library’s unique role in addressing this challenging issue.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Seattle Public Library actively commits its programs and resources to eliminate institutional racism by ensuring that barriers to access by staff and the public are eliminated, by supporting broader public access to Library programs and services, and by providing the public and staff equitable opportunities for growth through employment and education. The key concepts of this policy include:

- Making a system wide commitment;
- Naming institutional racism;
- Acknowledging that there are barriers that need elimination;
- Affirmatively supporting programs to achieve these ends; and
- Making sure that there is equitable access to skills training and employment opportunities for staff and the public.

DEFINITIONS

Individual/Interpersonal racism: Pre-judgement, bias, stereotypes or generalizations about an individual or group based on race.

Institutional racism: Policies, practices, and procedures that work to the benefit of white people and the detriment of people of color, usually unintentionally or inadvertently.

Structural racism: The interplay of policies, practices and programs of differing institutions which leads to adverse outcomes and conditions, occurring within the context of racialized historical and cultural conditions, for communities of color compared to white communities.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to any and all Library activities.

RELATED LAWS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Board Policy, *Diversity*.

Administrative Procedure, *Diversity Action Plan*.

Seattle City Council Resolution 31164, *Affirming the City's Race and Social Justice Work*.

Attachment 5

2019 Library Levy Categories & Budget Cross-walk

2019 Library Levy Ordinance (Section 4) – Six Categories of Library Services

Levy investments will be made in six categories of Library services. Program elements, in subsections A through F of this ordinance, are illustrative examples. In accordance with the annual City budget process, each year the Library Board shall adopt an annual operations plan and capital budget. The Chief Librarian and the Library Board shall submit to the Mayor and the City Council an annual levy expenditure plan that will supplement, maintain and improve the core Library services identified in this section. Levy proceeds will be used, in combination with the annual budget appropriation of City General Fund, Real Estate Excise Tax, and other City funds as available to the Library, for Library services.

Hours and Access

Major program elements include: supporting Library operating hours in neighborhood branches and the Central Library; providing access to Library programs and services in the community; and outreach and engagement services throughout the city.

Collections

Major program elements include: increasing the variety, depth and accessibility of collections with new titles and additional copies in various physical and digital formats; providing additional online resources as new platforms and services emerge; curating a local history collection and making those resources more widely available through digitization; providing fine-free access to the Library's collections; and continuing innovative approaches to collection distribution and to fulfilling patron material requests.

Technology

Major program elements include: replacing and upgrading the Library's technology infrastructure, including its Integrated Library System, the Library's main business platform for procuring, processing, and tracking Library materials; its enterprise network that provides high-speed internet and Wi-Fi access to the Central Library and all 26 branches; and its technology equipment, such as switches, routers, servers, cabling, computers, tablets, printers, copiers, scanners and widescreen monitors, and other audiovisual equipment for newly emerging technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality. Further, this category maintains and enhances the SPL.org website and catalog, with a focus on language accessibility, as well as device compatibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The technology program also supports the Library's digital equity efforts, including digital literacy instruction and provision and support of internet access devices for use within Library buildings and for check-out.

Maintenance

Major program elements include enhanced resources to provide routine, preventive and major maintenance for the Library's heavily-used buildings as they age, to prolong their useful life. Maintenance also includes funding to seismically retrofit three landmarked branches identified as high-vulnerability in the City's Unreinforced Masonry Building Study.

Supporting children

Program elements include support for programming targeted toward children ages zero to five.

Administration

Administration program elements include supporting implementation and accountability measures for Levy programs and annual reporting to the public on Levy outcomes.

2019 Library Levy Category to 2024 Library Priority Cross-Walk

2019 Library Levy Category	Library Priorities	2025 Proposed*
Hours & Access	Hours & Access	\$16,450
Collections	Providing Books & Materials	\$6,412
Technology	Technology & Online Services	\$2,821
Supporting Children	Literacy & Early Learning	\$454
Maintenance	Building & Facility Support	\$2,034
Maintenance	Major Maintenance (CIP)	\$7,989
Technology	Major Maintenance (IT)	\$0
Administration	Administration	\$723
Total		\$36,883

**Amounts in \$1,000s*

Attachment 6
2025 Capital Improvement Projects

Project Description	Fund	2025 Budget
Seismic Retrofit/Unreinforced Masonry (Levy & REET) - continuing construction costs associated with the University branch seismic retrofit project. Levy portion includes dedicated seismic allocation plus carve-out from the base major maintenance budget.	Levy	5,000,000
	REET	386,000
Mechanical & building systems, branches - mechanical system upgrades and electrification at priority branches that currently lack air-conditioning; also for emergent needs or as-needed branch repairs.	Levy	2,989,000
Subtotal	Levy	\$7,989,000
Subtotal	REET	\$386,000
Total		\$8,375,000

**Personnel costs have been prorated*

Attachment 7
2025 to 2030 Capital Improvement Program Plan

Project	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Library Major Maintenance (REET)	386,000	605,000	785,000	975,000	685,000	685,000
Library Major Maintenance (Levy)	4,489,000	4,669,000	-	-	-	-
Unreinforced Masonry/Seismic Retrofit (Dedicated Levy)	3,500,000	1,839,000	-	-	-	-
IT Enterprise Equipment (Levy)	-	474,000	-	-	-	-
Total	8,375,000	7,587,000	785,000	975,000	685,000	685,000

**Attachment 8
Interest Earnings and Gift Fund Budget**

Non-Labor Detail

	Budget
Robert C. Bunn Trust	
Hours & Access	
Content strategy & creation	100,000
Translation & language support	20,000
Targeted advertising & communication	52,000
Targeted Marketing	52,000
Promotional printing	15,000
Providing Books & Materials	
Decodable readers for shool support (one-time)	10,000
Add Portuguese language materials (one-time)	10,000
Admin	
Strategic Direction Support	20,000
Professional Board Training and Conferences	15,000
Board Consultant for CLO Review	5,000
CPGR Programming Support	650
All Staff Day Event	30,000
2025 cash register replacement project	30,000
Short Story dispensers	6,000
+\$3k matching for FOL service items for patrons (ear	3,000
Total	368,650

Interest Earnings

Hours & Access	
Marketing Outreach Giveaways	30,000
Intern stipends, refreshments, feminine hygiene, ha	11,000
Admin	
Legal Services and Support	25,000
RSJI Change Team Budget	13,500
Employee Engagement Committee	5,000
CLO Dues and Memberships	36,750
Mayoral/City-wide initiatives	15,000
Total	136,250

Misc Gifts

Providing Books & Materials	
Gustave J. Snelling Trust	8,000
Helen Snelling Trust	8,000
Brown Estate - Special Collections	13,000
Dowse Bequest - Special Collections	7,000
Halvor Holbeck Estate - Bookmobile & Mobile Vehicl	24,300
Halvor Holbeck Estate - Bookmobile & Mobile Vehicl	2,600
Total	62,900

Labor Detail (A)

	Budget
Albert S. Balch Trust	
Providing Books & Materials	
0.5 FTE Librn-A	68,000
Total	68,000
Robert C. Bunn Trust	
Admin	
1.0 FTE Strategy&Policy Advsr, CLO	126,000
1.0 FTE DigCommStrat	175,000
1.0 FTE PubRecCoord	139,000
Total	440,000
Rober C. Bunn Trust	
Admin	
1.0 FTE Com Prtnshps&GovRltnsPrgm Mg	173,000
1.0 FTE DEI Director	250,000
Technology & Online Services	
1.0 FTE CyberSecAnlyst	184,000
Total	607,000

Interest Earnings

Hours & Access	
3.0 FTE SecurityOfcr	312,000
Total	312,000