



CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Jamie Turbak
Director of Library Services

SUBJECT: 2025 Library Commission Annual Report

DATE:

City Administrator Approval

Date:

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The Oakland Public Library Commission (LC) For Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

☐ **Library Parcel Taxes Audit**

On June 13, 2024, a required audit of the Library Parcel Taxes for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 through FY 2022-23 was made available to the LC. The audit found that the City fell short of the required General Fund appropriation requirement by \$62,000 in FY 2022-23. Per a supplemental report prepared by Finance Dept. for the LEC meeting on 4/22/25, this shortfall was not authorized by subsequent emergency declarations, and will need to be "trued up" in a subsequent budget ***[waiting for confirmation on whether or not that occurred in the 2025-27 budget]***

☐ **Library Funding in the Oakland Budget**

the City of Oakland has been out of compliance with parcel tax measures since FY 2022-2023. Beginning in March 2025, Library Commissioners began meeting with city staff, city council, the interim mayor and the mayor to advise on the risks that this poses to the OPL system. Nonetheless, the city council passed a budget on June 11 that reduces the OPL General Fund Appropriation even further than it did in prior years, down to \$11.7 million. The LC recommends that the City Administrator work quickly to bring the city back into compliance with Measures C and D.

☐ **Structure and Activities of the Library Commission**

[shorten this section as it's supposed to be a summary]

The LC has ___ seats, of which ___ are currently filled. Three seats will be vacant by the end of 2024. While the LC prioritizes candidates that meet our objective of proportional representation by Council District, there are currently no members residing in D5. Ordinance

13757--adopted by Council in 2023--allows for Councilmembers to nominate candidates for the Commission, and the LC encourages Councilmembers to nominate residents from underrepresented districts to serve on the Commission. Since this Ordinance passed, the LC has received no nominations or referrals from members of City Council. We encourage Councilmembers to take advantage of the opportunity to refer their constituents to the LC.

As required by aforementioned Ordinance, the LC also has two standing committees, the Sustainability Committee, which oversees the effective delivery of library services, and the Community Engagement Committee, which maintains strategic lines of communication between the OPL and the Oakland community. ***[include some examples of specific action plan items the committees have carried out this year]***

Since the last LC report to the Life Enrichment Committee, the Commission has--in addition to performing our oversight role--begun to carry out our 2025 action plan. Our patron survey was approved by the city's Department of Race & Equity ***[when?]*** and will be rolled out later this year. Starting in May of 2025, all commissioners were given access to the city's Racial Equity Training, and ***[how many?]*** commissioners have completed this training as of the date of this report. The LC continues to receive and review quarterly facilities maintenance reports for each of the branches. ***[what else?]***

As was the case at the time of our last update, Commissioners regularly visit branches, meet with community advocates, monitor library funds appropriations and usage, and look for new opportunities to support our Libraries.

☐ **OPL Developments of Interest to the Commission**

In support of the LC's Sustainability and Community Engagement goals, Commissioners continuously engage with community advocacy groups and provide updates and/or request the Library Director provide updates on various OPL initiatives. ***[These include; ...]***

☐ **Library Usage**

In addition to maintenance reports, the LC tracks OPL visits and other statistics to ensure that Library resources are fully utilized, and that all Oakland residents have access to a safe, pleasant, welcoming and inclusive environment in our Libraries. ***[Summary of trends]***

☐ **ANY OTHER SECTIONS?**

LIBRARY PARCEL TAXES AUDIT

[Very briefly summarize that \$62K was missing for 22-23, and note any updates once we get confirmation from Jamie on whether or not this was "trued up"]

LIBRARY FUNDING IN THE OAKLAND BUDGET

[Describe who we met with, what our budget asks were, what happened]

[Note the GPF appropriations shortfall beginning in 22-23 and accelerating from 23-24 on

with retroactive "emergency declaration", which does not meet the standards of the parcel tax measures]

[Describe the risks faced by the city]

[Express our desire to assist the city in coming back into compliance as quickly as possible]

[Update table with new data]

	Measure C	Measure D	Total
FY 23-24	\$1,536,130	\$1,931,753	\$3,467,883
FY 24-25	\$2,261,262	2,156,181	\$4,417,443
FY 25-26 (planned)			
FY 26-27 (planned)			
Total			

[Note how much is or will be left in the reserve fund after the above withdrawals are carried out]

Note: This is copied over from last year, and will be updated to align with this year's talking points and GS response to Finance's 4/22/25 reply to the LEC.

Although Council adopted a measure on July 2 declaring a "Severe and Unanticipated Financial Event" in order to pass a budget that fell short on the Library fund appropriations required by Measures C and D, "substantial GPF deficits" of up to \$208 million for the FY 2023-2025 biennium were predicted by the city's Finance Department and reported to the City Administrator as early as November of 2022.

The words, "Severe and Unanticipated Financial Event", were taken directly from the text of Measure C, and--while the conditions that constitute such an event have not been defined in the measure--the City Administrator is required to submit a report to the City Council "explaining" the event. A further requirement is that the City Administrator report on the steps that were taken to avoid the need to reduce the required appropriation, and future steps that will be taken to return the appropriation amount to the required amount of \$14.5 million. It is the position of the LC that the City has failed to meet the reporting requirements as set out in the text of Measure C. The July 2 declaration by the City Council does not obviate this fact.

In the absence of a truly unanticipated event--such as a pandemic or natural disaster--the reduction in appropriations for OPL in the General Purpose Fund (GPF) puts the long-term sustainability of the OPL system in severe jeopardy in two ways. The first is that--if found to have violated any of the requirements of Measures C or D--the City will lose access to more than \$30 million dollars per year in parcel tax funds until the Maintenance of Effort is restored. This will effectively shut down the Oakland Public Library system. The second is that this reduction constitutes a broken promise to Oakland voters who--having seen restricted Library funds used to fill a GPF Deficit against their express wishes--may refuse to renew such measures in the future. It must be emphasized that when library advocates engaged with voters during the development of both parcel tax measures, the primary source of opposition revolved around concerns that these funds could be misused to fill a GPF deficit. The narrow exceptions and reporting requirement for same, as described in Measures C and D, were carefully written to prevent exactly what took place in the Council Chambers on July 2. The severe risks posed by failing to meet Measure C and D appropriations and reporting requirements cannot be overstated.

[Anything else we want to add here?]

At risk is not only more than 5,000 yearly OPL programs, services for Seniors, Youth, and the Unhoused Community, accessible operating hours, OPL-OUSD partnerships, community resilience

building, equity, safe community gathering spaces, and too many other benefits to be enumerated here; but the very existence of a functioning Library system.

As such, the LC strongly advises the City of Oakland to immediately take all necessary steps to correct the errors described above, and to comply with all requirements of Measures C and D going forward.

STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE LIBRARY COMMISSION

The Oakland Library Commission is an oversight body mandated by voter-enacted Parcel Tax measures C and D. Our structure and duties are further enumerated in Ordinance No. 13757 C.M.S.--as enacted by City Council in July of 2023.

The LC also supports the vital role of the Oakland Public Library in our community, by serving as an open liaison between Library Patrons, the Library Administration, the Mayor, and the City Council. To support this role, the LC receives regular informational reports from the OPL and other City Departments. Most recently, the LC received a presentation from the Planning Department, the OPL Chief Financial Officer, and ... **[who else?]**

The LC Bylaws and most recent Library Ordinance recommend that the 15-seat Commission have two members from each Council District, as well as an at-large representative. The current by-district membership is as follows:

District	Commissioners
1	2
2	1
3	3
4	1
5	0
6	3
7	1
At-Large	1

While we have been able to increase the geographic diversity of the commission since last year, Districts 2, 4, 5, and 7 still need more Commissioners, and we strongly encourage Councilmembers representing these districts to nominate or refer their constituents to join the Library Commission.

Standing Committees

The two standing committees of the LC are the Sustainability Committee and the Community Engagement Committee.

The Sustainability Committee oversees the effective delivery of library services and tracks maintenance, staffing and interdepartmental issues that may impact library operations. Maintenance issues are tracked through the Quarterly Maintenance Report, a document of all open outstanding service requests by library branch. This report is presented quarterly to all Commissioners, and it has been very helpful in highlighting outstanding issues at Branches. It serves as a starting point for discussions with branch managers and allows all Commissioners to advocate more effectively for the resolution of open requests. Here is the data for the table of

total open service requests for the period of Q1 2023 through Q2, 2025.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Open Service Requests</i>
Q1 2023	178
Q2 2023	126
Q3 2023	150
Q4 2023	109
Q1 2024*	202
Q2 2024	198
Q3 2024	
Q4 2024	
Q1 2025	
Q2 2025	

* Due to a reporting issue, Q1 2024 stats were updated on May 23, 2024.

[discuss any notable trends once data is added]

In April 2025, the Library Commission introduced a new Public Works Liaison role to assist with escalation of service requests. LC members review open service requests quarterly, reach out to Branch Managers to confirm priority, and now escalate these concerns to the the Public Works Liaison, who will then escalate directly to either Public Works or OPL Administration.

In 2024 **[when?]**, a Library Patron Experience Survey--which was commissioned by the Sustainability Committee and developed by an ad hoc group--was completed. The survey was reviewed and approved by the Oakland Department of Race and Equity in **[month?]** of 2025. We expect to begin rolling out this survey to patrons in late 2025 or early 2026.

The Community Engagement Committee exists to develop and maintain strategic lines of communication between the OPL and the Oakland community, to lead LC advocacy on behalf of the OPL, and to educate Oakland residents about OPL services and programs.

[Add something about the mixer]

Starting in in May of 2024, the Community Engagement Committee began to develop a communications advocacy plan for the 2025-2026 budget cycle. The committee worked to develop not only talking points, but additional documentation to help new commissioners feel comfortable reaching out to councilmembers and having important conversations for the first time during a difficult budget season.

Ad-Hoc Committees

[What ad hoc committees were active in 2024-2025 and what did they do specifically during this period?]

All Commission Activities

In addition to the activities led by the two Standing Committees, as described in the prior section, every Commissioner is assigned to represent one or more OPL Branches, and to liaise with at least one Councilmember on behalf of their branches and the entire OPL system. Commissioners also maintain relationships with local "Library Friends" groups. To ensure that relationships and

institutional knowledge are retained as the composition of the LC changes, the LC instituted an informal mentorship program in 2024, and so far, about 25% of the commission has participated in the program.

[talk about advocacy work w/councilmembers]

[OPL Advocates & Friends' groups]

[Showing up to speak at council meetings]

[meeting w/city admin on budget policy]

[What else are we missing?]

OPL DEVELOPMENTS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION

To support LC efforts to advocate for the continued sustainability and growth of the Oakland Public Library system, Commissioners track various initiatives by the City and Library advocacy groups.

Branch Feasibility Studies

The City and OPL have begun a feasibility study for the renovation, redevelopment or relocation of the Main Library. Additional feasibility studies are underway, led primarily by grassroots community advocacy organizations. Commissioners representing these groups provide regular updates to the LC and the OPL Director.

- **[Update on prior feasibility studies...next steps? Anything stalled?]**
- **[New studies? Upcoming?]**

Capital Improvements at Branch Libraries

There are many capital projects recently completed or underway at OPL due to decades of deferred maintenance. Despite being critical to the continued safe and effective operations of our libraries, most of these projects are reliant on external funding.

- **[Capital projects completed]**
- **[In progress]**
- **[Stalled by budget issues?]**
- **[upcoming?]**

Library Safety Manager

Due to ongoing safety concerns brought to the attention of OPL by Branch Managers and Patrons, OPL hired a Safety Manager in early 2024. **[describe outcomes of new programs implemented by Safety Manager]**

Racial Equity Action Plan

[Review presentation from Isaiah & colleague from last year...any outcomes to report?]

[Any other major changes/topics to report?]

LIBRARY USAGE

OPL Usage for the past five years

	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	FY24-25
Total Patron Visits	35,488	923,751	1,259,286	1,356,325	
Physical Items in Collection	1,329,593	1,316,765	1,368,400	1,371,544	
Print Items Borrowed	1,289,555	2,197,735	2,117,465	2,078,900	
E-materials Borrowed	643,595	490,869	760,503	1,026,375	
Number of Programs	108	4,549	5,064	6,116	
Uses of Public Internet Computers	8,696	168,467	100,073	103,747	
Virtual visits to Library Website	1,405,324	1,194,657	1,723,690	1,689,562	

A total of ____ patrons visited the Oakland Public Library in FY 24-25, this is [up/down] from ____ patron visits in FY 23-24, see the table below. **[Talk about trends and what they mean, also note, what do branch managers say about drop in computer use?]**

OPL Usage by Branch

[Do we want to compare more than 2 years?]

Branch	FY 2023-2023		FY 2023-2024	
	Patron Visits	Print Items Borrowed	Patron Visits	Print Items Borrowed
81st	68,616	75,839	70,000	71,584
AAMLO	8,400	46	8,549	51
Asian	163,449	161,960	184,408	159,997
Brookfield	31,469	16,163	31,000	15,520
Chavez	51,060	67,793	83,480	63,726

Dimond	113,325	329,870	145,800	334,917
Eastmont	63,042	24,550	27,600	25,811
Elmhurst	20,401	6,706	25,000	9,465
Golden Gate	37,059	91,786	38,400	94,517
Lakeview	72,713	120,316	85,000	116,543
Main	201,468	349,905	190,430	308,068
Melrose	25,800	35,943	28,380	33,670
MLK	36,000	24,818	42,000	22,137
Montclair	62,686	191,877	98,940	192,500
Piedmont	27,600	95,514	41,000	94,776
Rockridge	157,800	317,789	130,464	324,221
Temescal	87,292	156,690	91,657	166,188
West	31,106	49,900	34,217	45,209
Total	1,259,286	2,117,465	1,356,325	2,078,900

In addition to its Main library, 16 neighborhood branches and African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO), the Oakland Public Library is expanding its effort to engage people in the community by making resources available online. The library provides free public access to technology--computers, high-speed Wi-Fi, hotspots, and laptops--to help bridge the digital divide.

Additional facilities, programs and services for **FY 24-25** include:

[Are]

- OPL Summer Lunch Program
- Second Start Literacy Program

- Teen Takeover
- Family, Toddler and Preschool Story Time
- Bilingual Story Time
- Infant and Child Play Groups
- Crafting and Maker Workshops for Adults, Children and Teens
- Bike Fix Clinic
- Seed and Tool Lending
- Business Assistance Workshops
- Interest-based social clubs
- STEM Workshops

[Summarize the important of these programs]

CONCLUSION

[Hammer home the value of our libraries and the need to restore the GPF]

Appendix: Library Commission Rosters

Commissioners as of 6/30/2025
Gabrielle Sloane Law, Chair

Chiye Azuma, Vice-Chair

Cristina Tostado
Karen Zukor
Alex Weinberg
Brittany Buckmire
Carolyn Jones
Gay Plair Cobb
Mary Cain-Simon
Justus Samuels
Anand Patel
Zacharias George

The LC acknowledges and thanks the following individuals who ended their terms on the Commission since the previous report and a special acknowledgement to our outgoing chair, Mary Forte, and to Alternier Cook for her hold over status for several months to ensure our advocacy for the West Oakland Branch **[any other special acknowledgements?]**

Mary Forte
Bradley Boyd
Carolyn Moskovitz
Karen Roye

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends that the City Council receive an informational report from the Oakland Public Library Commission, covering the period from June 2023 to June 2024.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Kere Gonzales, staff to the LC, at 510-238-3281.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Turbak
Director of Library Services