



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:

INFORMATION

The attached informational report (Attachment A) provides the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Oakland Library Commission (LC), including a detailed summary of LAC activities and progress towards achieving strategic goals. It also includes recommendations to the Oakland City Council regarding critical investments, planning, advocacy and other forms of ongoing assistance to support the LC.

Note: because we are transitioning this year to delivering this report for the calendar year, this report will summarize the activities of the LC for 2025 as well as Q3-4 2024.

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 2024 through December 2025.

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

Attachments (1)

Introduction

The Oakland Library Commission is an oversight body, the existing of which is 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 the Oakland City Council in July of 2023.

The LC also supports the vital role of the Oakland Public Library's 18 branches in our community, by serving as an open liaison between library staff and patrons, various community advocacy groups, OPL Administration, the mayor and the city council, and multiple city departments whose operations are critical to the functioning and long-term sustainability of our library system.

In addition to branch-level advocacy various other activities pursuant to our role as an oversight body for the parcel tax measures, the LC has otherwise been occupied in meeting the goals of our 2025 Action Plan, which was finalized at the end of the prior calendar year. Of note is that this plan was updated to include a new strategic objective to align our activities with OPL's recent adoption of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) in 2024. Our strategic goals for 2025 were as follows:

- 1. Establish long-term financial sustainability for Oakland Public Library**
- 2. Increase public awareness of Oakland Public Library financial situation, need for a new Main Library, programs and services**
- 3. OBJECTIVE 3: Plan and advocate for the maintenance of library systems and services**
- 4. Maintain LC infrastructure to sustain a robust commission**
- 5. Support the goals and objectives of the OPL Racial Equity Action Plan**

Given the urgent financial crisis faced by the City of Oakland during the most recent budget cycle, the LC has in many cases gone above and beyond the work originally anticipated in our 2025 Action Plan in order to advocate for the immediate funding needs of our branches as well as the long-term sustainability of the OPL system. This included mobilizing commissioners and library advocates to speak and leave comments at multiple city council and committee meetings. We continue to engage at all levels of city government to advocate for a timely resolution to the city's current financial crisis and a full restoration of the OPL General Purpose Fund (GPF) appropriation required by the parcel tax measures.

Progress on the LC 2025 Action Plan

Establish long-term financial sustainability for Oakland Public Library

During the reporting period, the LC Community Engagement Committee developed a comprehensive advocacy plan with concise talking points and a clear ask for our mayor and city council members; restore the \$14.5 million GPF appropriation required by Measure C, and direct city staff to comply fully with all reporting requirements. The committee also developed a guide to help new commissioners build confidence in their interactions with city decision makers. Commissioners were able to meet formally with almost all members of city council or their staff this year as well as the interim mayor and mayor.

The commission continues to request and review vital information pertaining to the operations

and financial sustainability of the OPL system on an annual basis. This includes a budget review from the OPL finance department, updates on the OPL Capital Improvement Plan, and presentations on library programming.

Increase public awareness of Oakland Public Library financial situation, need for a new Main Library, programs and services

The LC collaborated with OPL Advocates to host the annual OPL Mixer, which honors library volunteers while growing and strengthening the advocacy network between OPL supporters, commissioners, and the public. Commissioners also grew and strengthened coalitions with branch friends' groups, citywide OPL advocacy groups, and advocates for other parcel-tax funded public goods such as Oakland parks and other critical infrastructure.

Plan and advocate for the maintenance of library systems and services

This year the LC assigned a liaison to the General Plan Advisory Committee for the Oakland General Plan Update. The commission also created a new program to more efficiently escalate branch concerns related to open tickets with Oakland Public Works (OPW) and assigned a liaison to OPW for this purpose. The LC continues to track all open service requests from OPL branches to ensure that critical repairs, custodial work and maintenance are completed as soon as possible.

Maintain LC infrastructure to sustain a robust commission

The LC brought on 6 new commissioners in the prior year and 3 commissioners this year. These commissioners received a full orientation package and were also matched with more experienced commissioners in informal mentorship arrangements. The commission also incorporated review of the yearly action plan into the agenda setting portion of meetings, to ensure that future agenda items aligned with the goals of the commission. The structure of standing agenda items was also reformed to ensure adequate time for commissioners to report on their advocacy work, and to facilitate the development of working relationships on the commission.

Support the goals and objectives of the OPL Racial Equity Action Plan

In alignment with OPL's REAP, this year the LC adopted the requirement that all commissioners receive Oakland's "Reducing Bias and Cultivating Inclusion" training. As of the date of this report, X% of commissioners have completed this training. As part of their branch advocacy, commissioners support and attend a variety of events that showcase the cultural and racial diversity of Oakland.

Additional Advocacy for the Future of the Oakland Public Library

In response to Oakland's ongoing financial crisis, the LC worked tirelessly to advocate for the OPL system around the 2025-2027 biennial budget cycle. In addition to regular meetings with councilmembers and other decision makers prior to the most recent budget vote, commissioners performed significant research and circulated detailed analyses of city actions and policies in relation to the city's failure to meet the \$14.5 million GPF appropriation required by the parcel tax measures. On account of our findings, we mobilized OPL supporters to speak up to demand more accountability from the city to meet Measure C and D requirements at the April 22, 2025 meeting of the Life Enrichment Committee. We again mobilized library supporters to the June 22 Community and Economic Development Committee meeting to urge the committee to adopt a newly negotiated lease with the Unity Council to ensure the future of the beloved Cesar Chavez branch in Fruitvale. Commissioners also engaged extensively with OPL advocates and with advocates for other parcel tax measures.

By building these coalitions, combining forces, and mobilizing members of the public, the LC and other advocates for public goods in the City of Oakland were able to hold the city accountable to the public. The LC is encouraged by the recent publication by the City Administrator of a Roadmap to Fiscal Health that prioritizes a plan to meet voter-mandated service requirements. The LC will be vigilant to future developments and the implementation timeline. We will ensure that the city remains transparent and accountable to the people of Oakland in regards to the voter-mandated funding of our libraries.

OPL Highlights from the Last Year

[Anything that happened in OPL that the LC was specifically involved in or supported, events, capital improvements, programming, etc.]