



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Jamie Turbak
Director of Library Services

SUBJECT: 2025 Library Commission Annual Report

DATE: January 27, 2026

City Administrator Approval

Date:

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The Oakland Public Library Commission (LC) Covering The Period From June 2024 Through December 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This informational report of the Oakland Public Library Commission (LC) includes a detailed summary of the commission's 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 Oakland Public Library (OPL).

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The Oakland Public Library Commission is an oversight body, the existence of which is mandated by voter-enacted Parcel Tax Measures C and D. Its 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 plays a vital role in support of the Oakland Public Library's 16 neighborhood branches and three special collections by serving as an open liaison between library staff and patrons, various community advocacy groups, OPL Administration, the mayor, the City Council, and multiple city departments whose operations are critical to the functioning and long-term sustainability of the library system.

In addition to branch-level advocacy, the LC has been involved in various activities as part of its role as an oversight body for the parcel tax measures. The LC has also focused on achieving the goals set forth in the LC 2025 Action Plan, which was finalized at the end of the previous calendar year. Notably, this plan was updated to include a new strategic objective to align

activities with OPL's recent adoption of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) in 2024. The 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's financial situation, need for a new Main Library, programs, and services**
- 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 (REAP)**

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 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. The LC continues 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 2025 Action Plan

Establish long-term financial sustainability for Oakland Public Library

During the reporting period, the LC Community Engagement Standing 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 the city council or their staff this year, as well as the interim mayor and the mayor.

The Commission continues to request and review, on an annual basis, vital information on the operations and financial sustainability of the OPL system. This includes a budget review from the OPL finance department, a presentation from the City Auditor, updates on the OPL Capital Improvement Plan, and presentations on library programming.

Increase public awareness of Oakland Public Library's 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 maintenance 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 six commissioners in the prior year and three commissioners in 2025. These commissioners received a comprehensive orientation package and were matched with more experienced commissioners through informal mentorship arrangements. The commission also incorporated the review of the yearly action plan into the agenda-setting portion of meetings, to ensure that future agenda items aligned with the commission's goals. 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, the LC adopted the requirement that all commissioners receive Oakland's "Reducing Bias and Cultivating Inclusion" training. As of the date of this report, all but the most newly appointed commissioners have completed this training. As part of their branch advocacy, commissioners support and attend a variety of events that showcase Oakland's cultural and racial diversity.

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 budget passage, 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, 2025, 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.

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 regarding the voter-mandated funding of libraries.

OPL Highlights from the Last Year

As part of its monthly meetings, the LC features presentations by library staff highlighting the wide range of programs and services offered by OPL. The presentations help to familiarize not only the Commissioners but also the public with all that the library has to offer:

- Second Start -- OPL's adult literacy program with its team of dedicated volunteer tutors and equally dedicated "learners."
- Treasures at Main -- a presentation of the Oakland History Center (OHC) and Magazine

and Newspaper Room (M&N) at the Main Library. We found out that there's a very good chance that what you cannot find on the internet can be found at the Main!

- East Oakland Engagement Team – Community outreach program engaging the East Oakland community. Its programs include the Bike Fix Program (at 81st Ave. and MLK Jr), the Bike Library Lounge, the Father Circle, and the Little Town Libraries (in partnership with Stephen and Ayesha Curry's Eat, Learn, Play Foundation.)

Additional highlights from the LC:

- A General Plan ad hoc committee was formed to track and advocate for the libraries in the current update of the General Plan. The LC noted that the General Plan survey made scant mention or note of libraries, despite libraries' presence as a critical community resource on par with parks and community centers. The ad hoc committee was formed to address this oversight and to ensure that our libraries remain relevant to the planning process.
- A Room Naming ad hoc committee was formed to review and update the library space naming policy.
- The Action Plan ad hoc committee continues to update and track commission activities to ensure that Commission activities are aligned with the strategic goals and mission of the LC.
- Individual Commissioners continue to advocate for and work closely with their assigned library branches in small, but significant ways, such as in following up on facilities repair requests that are overlooked or "stuck" in the system.
- Many of the Commission members are also active members of the Friends of Oakland Public Library (FOPL) and of individual Branch Friends groups. This past year, Commissioner Azuma founded a new Friends Group for the MLK Jr. Branch in partnership with the Havenscourt Neighbors group. The MLK Jr. Friends now holds monthly litter walks, is on NextDoor, WhatsApp, and has a growing Instagram account. The group shares its tools and supplies with the Elmhurst Friends and regularly supports each other's events.
- The Branch Friends Network held a meeting on October 27, 2025, attended by Commissioners Jones and Patel, and also by former commissioners Cook and Forte. In total, 14 branch Friends groups attended this event. In a follow-up to the meeting, Commissioner Samuels (representing West Oakland) stepped up to help develop the Branch Friends Information Form.
- The LC's regular meeting agenda includes time for each Commissioner to report and share what is going on in their respective branches. Over this past year, we've heard about the Coffee with a Cop program, started at the Elmhurst Branch and now being considered at several other branches; turkey and toy giveaways during the holiday season at 81st Ave. and Melrose; a job and career assistance at West Oakland, a trades career fair at Elmhurst, the Knitting Circle at Dimond (newbies welcome!), seed libraries and gardening help at many branches; and of course, Book Clubs, in-person and online, at Dimond, Lakeview, Montclair, Rockridge, a Spanish Book Club, and most recently at West Oakland that now boasts over 30 members.

CONCLUSION AND COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The LC asks that the City Council restore \$14.5 million General Fund appropriation to OPL's budget for FY26-27. The LC also asks that City Council support capital appropriations for the Hoover Durant neighborhood library and electrical / energy upgrades at multiple branches in the next bond sale.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends that the City Council receive an informational report from the Oakland Public Library Commission (LC) covering the period from June 2024 through December 2025.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Jamie Turbak, Director of Library Services at (510) 238-6610.

Respectfully submitted,

JAMIE TURBAK
Director of Library Services

Prepared by:
Kere Gonzales, Executive Assistant
Oakland Public Library