

Saint Paul Public Library Needs Assessment

Section 14.05 (b)

Director's Priorities. Prior to transmitting the budget to the Mayor, the director shall have presented a needs and resource assessment to the library board with a list of the director's priorities. The presentation shall be made not later than one hundred sixty-five (165) days before the date requiring adoption of the proposed maximum tax levy in accordance with state law.

2024 selected impacts

- 1.2M people came through our doors, up 9% over 2023.
- Circulation up 4% over 2023.
 - E-circ increased 16%; physical circ decreased 1%.
 - Physical circ still makes up 64% of total circulation.
- Number of programs and attendance is up 24% and 32%, respectively.
- Meeting room bookings by community and city staff up 20% over 2023.
- More than 166,000 computer sessions, nearly 100,000 wi-fi sessions – increase of 9% and 7%, respectively.

How Might We?

A "How Might We" (HMW) question is **a design thinking technique used to reframe a problem or challenge into an opportunity for innovation**, prompting brainstorming and ideation by focusing on potential solutions rather than immediate answers.

Transform library buildings to meet current and future needs

Stable budget

- Operate and maintain existing locations across the city.
- With private funds, make critical technology and play and learn investments at Merriam Park, Rice Street and George Latimer Central, Sun Ray.
- Open a new Hamline Midway Library; advance improvements at Rondo and Saint Anthony Park with City's CIB funds and Public Safety Aid.

Future questions

- How might we secure the public resources necessary to deliver on Transforming Libraries and maximize the private funding already secured?
- How might we think differently about maintenance of city properties?

Provide welcoming, safe, community-centered services and spaces where everyone belongs.

Stable budget

- 665 hours of public services per week. In 2025, this includes expanded Merriam Park hours during time Saint Anthony Park is closed.
- Maintain safe staffing levels and welcoming library experiences.
- Access to library services, including free help, computers, wi-fi, meeting rooms, programs

Future questions

- How might we sustainably resource safety in our libraries?
- How might we challenge our thinking about library services, programs, and hours available across the city?

Celebrate and affirm the importance of literacy in the community and as a core service of SPPL.

Stable budget

- Free access to nearly 750,000 individual items for anyone with a library card.
- Decreased purchasing power for Library, resulting in less access and longer wait times for residents.
- Innovative Literacy Action Cohort underway to support library staff in developing new skills to support literacy for all ages.

Future questions

- How might we balance the demand for both e-books and physical materials alongside cost increases?
- How might we support increased literacy rates in our community?

Deepen and increase the impact of SPPL's equity, inclusion and anti-racism behaviors and practices.

Stable Budget:

- Welcome everyone, regardless of identity, into library services that celebrate their lived experiences and identities.
- Create and deliver training, coaching, and mentorship opportunities to staff.
- Hire, support, and retain workforce that matches demographics of Saint Paul.

Future questions

- How might the federal mandates, language shifts, and other realities impact work that is foundational to daily work of SPPL?
- What impact will a sustained current environment have on our staff and residents?

Library stakeholders can voice the important role SPPL plays in our city, state, and nation.

Stable Budget

- Partner closely with The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library on grant opportunities for new and existing library services.
- Share the importance of SPPL and the value of our work—tell the story of the SPPL of today and the critical role we play in our city. Increase visitors.

Future Questions

- With disinvestment of libraries at the federal level (IMLS, others) and funding risks at the state level, how might we re-invest in the importance of libraries at the local level?
- How might we elevate the role SPPL (and other public libraries) play in the essential fabric of our democracy — city, state and nation?

Invest in the development of SPPL staff.

Stable budget:

- Maximize annual Perrie Jones endowment specifically for staff training and fellowships for higher education.
- Resource new staff onboarding, including new employee orientation, check-ins with all new staff at 30 days, and training plans for each position.

Future questions:

- How might we continue to support staff development while also keeping our doors open to the public?
- How might we resource under-invested but essential library functions within SPPL without taking away resources from other areas of service?

What thoughts or questions are on
your minds?