



Saint Paul  
Public Library

# Library Needs Assessment

Maureen Hartman

Library Board

April 1, 2026

# 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.

# 2025 outputs

- **23,000 visitors per week** (1.17M down 6% over 2024)
- **55,000 materials circulated every week** (2.9M; down only 1% over 2024)
  - 11% increase in electronic circulation (1.1M in 2025)
  - 7% decrease in physical circulation (1.7M in 2025)
  - Physical circulation still makes up 60% of total circulation.
- **86 meeting rooms uses per week by community members** (4,500; increase of 7% over 2024)
- **48 programs per week with 650 people attending.** (both down 25% over 2024)
- **3,100 computer sessions; 1,800 wi-fi sessions per week.** (119,000 computer sessions, decrease of 28% over last year. Wi-fi sessions down slightly.)

# 2025 and early 2026 selected wins

- **Read Brave – 2025 and 2026!**
  - Two years of standing room only for Read Brave, Talk Brave (150+)
  - 1,000 students at school visits this year!
- **Transforming Libraries**
  - Merriam and Rice Street technology improvements
  - Hamline Midway later this year
  - Rondo open Q4 2026
  - Hayden Heights open Q4 2027
- **Library Safety**
  - Incidents down over 40% across the system in 2025 from 2024
- **Special Edition Library Card**
  - 24% increase in number of Saint Paul residents **who have and use a library card**
  - Commemorating 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SE Asian migration to Minnesota
- **Library Labor Management Committee**
  - Monthly meetings with 1-2 members of each of 5 bargaining units in Library
  - Discussions about staffing, scheduling, safety, staff well-being, other topics.

# 2025 and early 2026 challenges

**Digital Security Incident:** 350 public computers and 270 staff computers.

- Community impacts – 6+ weeks
  - No Internet or wi-fi
  - No printing
  - No telephones at most locations
- Staff impacts:
  - Manual circulation – no check-ins, not able to fulfill holds
  - No internet or wi-fi access

## **Operation Metro Surge**

- Fewer residents using library spaces and services in January and February than in 2024
- Impacts on staff – both at work and in their personal lives

## **Staffing**

- Balancing act daily
- City's hiring freeze (Q3/4 2025 – Q1 2026) lifting but still catching up

## **Safety**

- Spring and summer bring challenges to public spaces

# 2026 Selected Priorities

- Hamline Midway Library re-opens
- Hayden Heights Library under construction
- Rondo Community Library re-opens
- Manage staffing within reduced budget environment (reduced sub budget; increased vacancy rate).
- Library Safety Strategy – beginning restorative practices phase
- Next stages of staff well-being team
- Anti-bias training for all staff
- Safety infrastructure investments
- Internal process improvements

# 2027 and beyond Needs Assessment

- **Library Safety Strategy** sustainable funding
  - \$650K annually beginning in 2027
- **Public services staffing** – more expensive to operate libraries
  - Using existing FTE to re-open Hamline Midway and will do same with Hayden Heights.
  - Will need at minimum additional staffing to open Riverview Library in 2028-2029.
- Secure full funding for entirety of **Transforming Libraries**
  - Estimated \$6-7M still needed for Riverview
- **Funding gaps due to necessary increased expenses:** library materials, library technology, deferred maintenance and renovated spaces
- **How many library locations and hours** can the city sustainably support now and into the future?
  - How many hours? How many locations?
  - What services are most important? How does staffing keep pace?

What thoughts or questions are on  
your minds?