



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing**

**COMMITTEES ON FINANCE AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES &
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
May 26, 2026**

Good morning, my name is Tony Marx and I am the president of The New York Public Library (NYPL). I want to thank City Council Speaker Menin, Deputy Speaker and Committee Chair Doctor Williams, Chair Lee, and the members of the committees for the opportunity to testify today on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Executive Budget.

Over the past several years the Library has repeatedly faced significant cuts to its operating budget. As a result, we started each of these budget cycles at a deficit and subsequently spent precious resources advocating to get back to even. Although FY26 was one of the first times we were held harmless and even received an increase, the total \$32.7M in restored and additional funds was one-time and not baselined

But this year is different. Mayor Mamdani has delivered on his promise to "end the budget dance" with an Executive Budget that restores and baselines Libraries at \$31.7M in operating funds. The Mayor also baselined the additional \$2M received in FY26 for the Council's effort to expand Sunday service in his FY27 Preliminary budget for a total of \$33.7M.

To borrow from the Mayor, this marks a "new era" for Libraries. Thanks to the Administration and the City Council's ongoing support and advocacy, we will no longer start each budget cycle with a laborious, costly quest to get out of the red to secure the same level of funding. As Mayor Mamdani recently stated, the budget dance kept us "on the perpetual back foot, desperately

trying to keep the same floor year after year instead of being able to advocate for more." It is refreshing to spend May and June focused on the effectiveness and availability of key offerings such as Sunday service, After School, and Summer at the Library rather than grappling with their potential reductions.

The Mayor has acknowledged that restored and baselined funds are not meant to conclude budget allocations but rather to ease upcoming negotiations with the Council. This is a historic starting point, and it's why we rely on the Council as we request increased expense funding to address \$15.2M in unmet needs from our rising costs of operations, emergency facilities repairs budget, and collections. The City's Libraries have operated on a mostly flat budget for several years. Along the way, we have faced higher operating costs such as technology and cybersecurity. Other increased costs come from compliance with local laws that regulate the management of our buildings and require coverage of certain union prescription expenses.

Increased operating funds also help us reduce unexpected, short-term branch closures. Because most of our buildings are small, aging structures, many of which are over 100 years old, we often deal with unplanned closures due to day-to-day maintenance challenges. In Q1-Q3 of FY26, branches lost 182 hours of service for emergency repairs and maintenance. With more funds in our emergency repairs budget, we can limit these losses to provide more consistent, reliable service. Collections are another significant category within our rising costs. Library materials are the most essential element to our mission to provide all New Yorkers with equitable access to knowledge and opportunity. But as demand increases for our materials, their costs are also going up. This hinders our ability to maintain a modern, diverse range of items that speaks to the needs of the communities we serve.

We know that the Mayor is still committed to working with the Council towards his second promise for Libraries to constitute 0.5% of the budget. Funding at this level provides an

additional \$28M for NYPL and the dollars needed to expand service. Having our doors open longer means more time for local branches to be a hub for a graduating high school senior looking for college and career advice, a Teen Center for a young adult to socialize with their peers, an open place for kids to drop-in for After School tutoring, or a trusted venue for New Yorkers of all income levels and backgrounds to file their taxes. We know that the demand for more services is there. A recent Teen Career Resources Fair at NYPL hosted 1,600 attendees with over 40 businesses, organizations, and nonprofits for internships, early-career opportunities, and workforce development programs. Last school year, total attendance for our after school program was just over 68,000 and we expect to surpass that number this year as quarter-over-quarter growth already shows a 31% increase in attendance. The FY26 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report (PMMR) shows a steady increase in key metrics such as program attendance, library card holders, and computer and wireless sessions from FY23 through FY25. In January, a New York Times survey of 35,000 New Yorkers showed "more funding for Libraries" to be their top choice for how the Mayor could improve the city.

FY27 is likewise an opportunity for a transformational capital investment in Libraries. While day-to-day maintenance addresses short-term emergencies, many of these same locations are in need of longterm, structural, renovations. The Mayor took a first step in the Executive Budget with the allocation of \$16.5M to the full renovation of our Great Kills Library on Staten Island. We ask the Council to take our remaining infrastructural needs into account ahead of its negotiations with the Administration. The NYPL's capital priorities for the next five years total approximately \$330M. This sum includes full renovations at locations such as Francis Martin, Soundview, and Hudson Park Libraries as well as significant maintenance needs that cannot be addressed with expense dollars, and shortfalls from delayed projects. Moving forward with this agenda is challenging for many reasons, chief among them a City capital process that often results in costly budget shortfalls and significant delays.

Mayor Mamdani's commitment to "excellence in government" as well as the City Council's recent hearing in April show that city leaders are prepared to reform the inefficient capital process. While we look forward to continued collaboration on these efforts, we have also proven to be a reliable partner for short-term fixes in parallel. One such solution is a transformative investment by the City through the ten-year capital plan. Just last year, NYPL reopened five century-old Carnegie branches in high needs areas in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. These multi-year, top-to-bottom renovations delivered modern, ADA-accessible branches with dedicated spaces for children and teens and structural upgrades that will preserve these buildings for decades to come. This undertaking was only possible thanks to a \$100M investment from the City in the ten-year capital plan in 2016. NYPL then worked with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) to initiate and complete the projects. We request a transformational investment of \$150M to move forward with our current slate of full renovations.

Another creative solution we've undertaken is colocation, which incorporates new libraries within housing developments. In 2024, NYPL opened a brand new, state of the art, Inwood Library, which was integrated within an affordable housing development with 172 units and other amenities such as a community center and Universal Pre-K. The success of this project served as a blueprint for similar colocation initiatives, including a new Grand Concourse Library, which is moving forward with public approvals after designating a developer this past December, and Bloomingdale Library, which is in the request for proposals phase. We have discussed these initiatives with Speaker Menin and the Administration, and are currently working with both, along with respective council members to assess the feasibility of additional colocation projects.

Alongside transformational investments, we rely on lump sum, undesignated capital funding from the Speaker and Council. This gives us the flexibility to address unexpected shortfalls and

new capital projects. To that end, NYPL requests a \$10M capital allocation from the Speaker and Borough Delegations for our capital agenda.

While this is a new era for the Mayoralty, we know that little has changed within this body. Every time the library faced significant cuts over the past few years it was the City Council who took up our cause and joined us in the fight for restoration and even additional funding in FY26.

The City Council and the Administration are on the same page. With restoration and baselined funds taken care of, we no longer need to, as the Mayor recently stated, ask Libraries to "justify their existence." Let's go beyond mere existence this year to consider how increased library funding contributes to a more affordable New York for all who call it home.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.