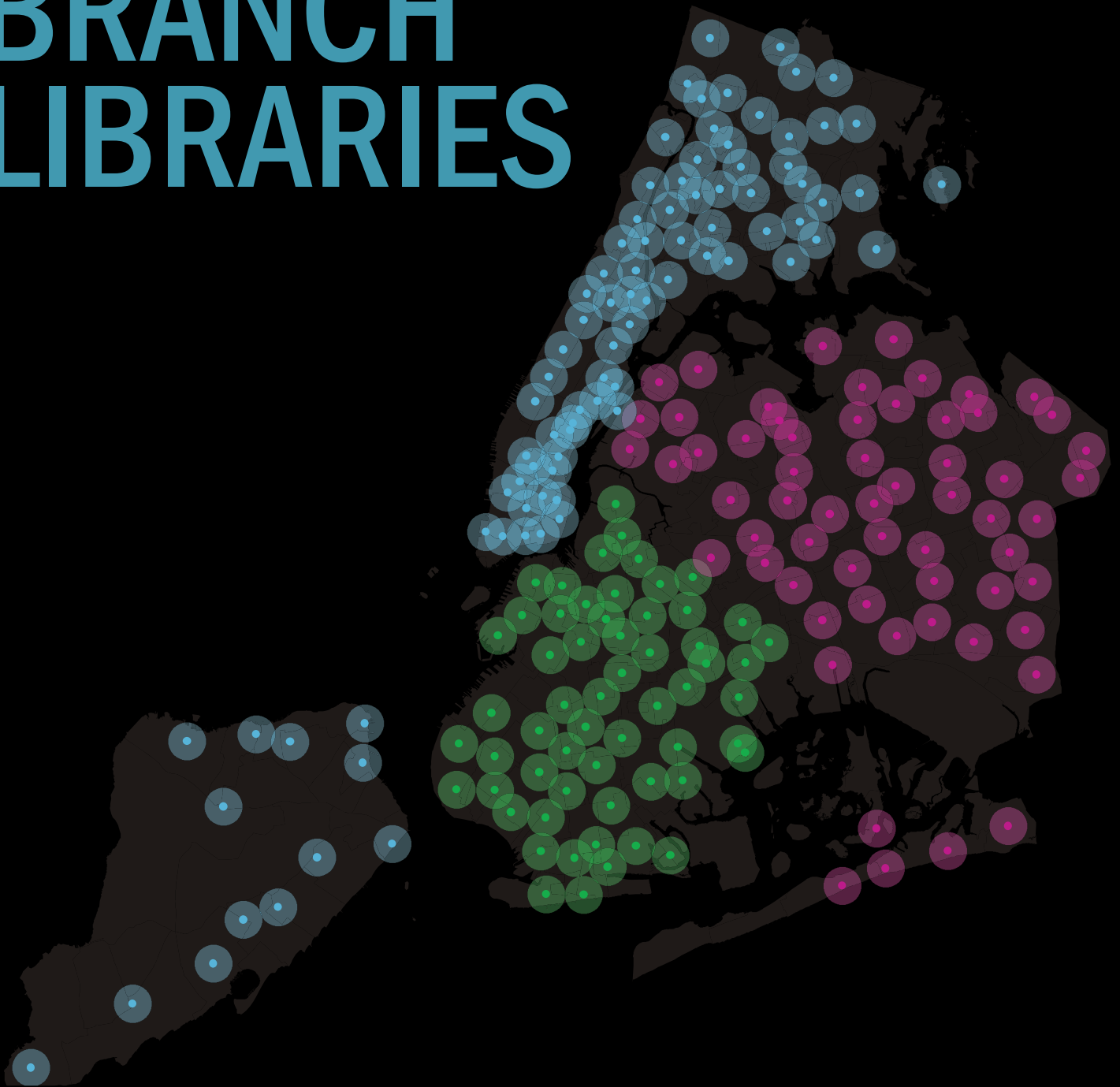


RE-ENVISIONING NEW YORK'S BRANCH LIBRARIES



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This report was made possible by generous support from the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

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Support for Center for an Urban Future has been provided by the Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation and the Fund for the City of New York.

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RE-ENVISIONING NEW YORK'S BRANCH LIBRARIES

AT A TIME WHEN FAR TOO MANY NEW YORKERS lack the basic language and technological skills needed to access decent-paying jobs, branch libraries have become a critical part of New York City's human capital system, the go-to place for upgrading one's skills and a key platform for economic empowerment. Libraries also have stepped in as critical resources as record numbers of freelancers are looking for a place to do their work, students from pre-k through 12th grade need to supplement their studies with enrichment programs, and neighborhood residents want a "third place" to meet with neighbors and keep up with events. As Superstorm Sandy revealed in 2012, libraries are even an important part of building and maintaining strong social networks necessary for community recovery efforts.

Yet, despite expanding needs and growing circulation and program attendance numbers, New York isn't coming close to fulfilling the promise of its community libraries. The average branch library in New York City is 61 years old, and a significant share of the branches suffer from major physical defects such as a lack of light and ventilation, water leaks and over-heating due to malfunctioning cooling systems. In addition, the vast majority of branches—including "newer" ones built in the past 40 years—are poorly configured for how New Yorkers are using libraries today, with little space for classes, group work and individuals working on laptop computers. Meanwhile, the libraries have just started to scratch the surface when it comes to taking advantage of new technologies, and they have only begun to design branches

in ways that improve how they serve specific populations, such as seniors and teens.

More than half of the city's 207 library buildings are over 50 years old and a quarter were built at least a century ago. With such an aging building stock, it's not surprising that the city's libraries are on the verge of a maintenance crisis. The city's three library systems have at least \$1.1 billion in capital needs, and that's mainly just to bring the branches into a state of good repair. Bringing them into the 21st century would require an even greater investment.

Cities from Seattle and San Francisco to Chicago and Columbus have recently undertaken multi-year campaigns to rebuild or renovate a significant share of their libraries. But New York City has made barely any headway in addressing its libraries' infrastructure needs. Each year only a tiny fraction of the branches that need to be renovated—much less replaced—receive any funding to do so, and the few that do receive support can take years to be repaired because of the city's time-consuming approvals and contracting process. Only 15 new libraries have been built in the past 20 years.

Over the past decade, the Bloomberg administration's major capital investments in new parks, schools and cultural institutions have had a transformative impact on the city. It's now time to make a similar game-changing investment to repair, modernize and expand the city's public libraries. This first-of-its-kind blueprint for re-envisioning New York's branch libraries provides a number of achievable options and ideas for doing so.

NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO, THE CENTER FOR AN URBAN

Future published *Branches of Opportunity*, a report documenting that New York City's public libraries have become more vital than ever, and are serving more New Yorkers in more ways than ever before. In this new report, we provide an exhaustive analysis of the libraries' capital needs and offer a comprehensive blueprint detailing more than 20 actionable steps that city government and the libraries themselves could take to address these needs.

Among other things, we propose reforms to the capital funding and contracting process and detail specific approaches for realizing efficiencies across the libraries' physical plants. In addition to outlining strategies for new branch buildings and renovations, we describe how the libraries could better engage communities in the planning of new libraries and how the city could tie library investments to broader community development and affordable housing goals. With these tools, we believe the de Blasio administration has a golden opportunity to not only transform libraries across the five boroughs, but to put them on a more sustainable path for the growing number of residents who depend on them.

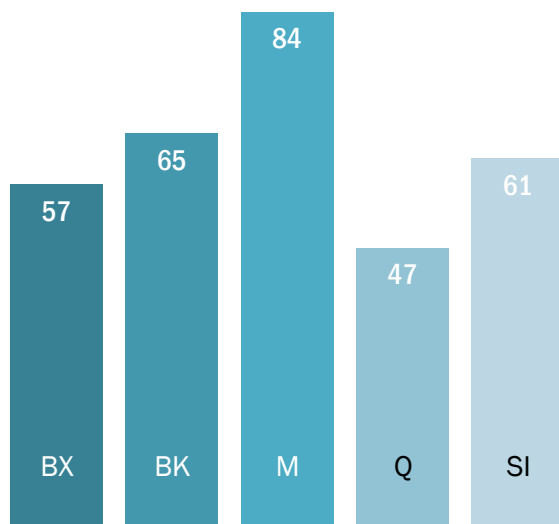
In the course of our research, we visited 50 libraries across all five boroughs and surveyed over 300 librarians about the conditions in their branches. We analyzed branch-by-branch performance data as well as key metrics about their size, layouts, amenities and capital needs. We interviewed library administrators and experts in more than 25 cities across the nation and around the world, which helped us understand funding and design strategies that have worked and could serve as models

for New York. We also spoke with more than 50 New York-based library staff members and experts in a wide variety of fields, including library science, community development, education and government finance. In partnership with the Architectural League of New York, we also held two focus groups composed of 15 prominent designers and architects.

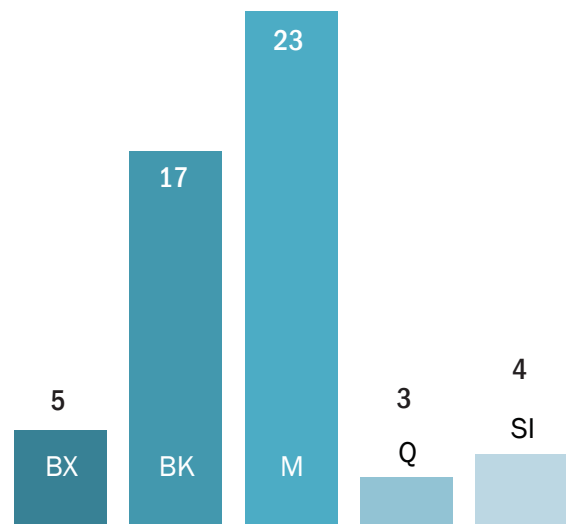
The set of programmatic demands placed on New York City's public libraries is immense and growing all the time: In addition to providing books and other learning materials, libraries are called upon to serve as a place where neighbors can gather and talk, hold meetings about community issues and engage in clubs and other group activities. They're an increasingly important information resource for anyone looking to find out about government services and requirements. And in an era when English and digital literacy are essential for job seekers, and the need to pick up new skills has never been greater, libraries are the city's only free and open lifelong learning resource. As such they need to provide sufficient space for adult learners and after-school programs.

In fiscal year 2013, the city's 207 branch buildings greeted nearly 36 million visitors, or approximately 160,000 every day they were open.¹ Libraries circulated 61 million materials citywide and enrolled over 2.4 million people in their public programs, including everything from story time for elementary school kids, to English language classes for immigrants, to film editing workshops for teenagers. And despite dwindling budgets, these performance numbers have been growing rapidly over the last decade. Between fiscal years 2003 and 2013, circu-

1. *Average Age of New York City Libraries*



2. *Library Branches over 100 Years Old by Borough*



lation increased by 46 percent and program attendance by 62 percent.

At the same time, however, the city’s three library systems—including the New York Public Library (serving the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island), the Brooklyn Public Library and the Queens Library—have struggled to keep many of their older branches in a state of good repair, much less current in meeting the space and technology needs of today’s users. The three library systems have prioritized nearly \$1.1 billion in capital needs, spread across 178 branches, or 86 percent of their buildings.² Of that, approximately \$812 million is for state of good repair and interior renovation projects, and \$278 million is for site acquisition and new construction.

Excluding cost estimates for expansions and replacement buildings, 59 different branches across the city each have \$5 million or more in needs, including 18 in Manhattan, 16 in Brooklyn, 16 in the Bronx, five in Staten Island and four in Queens. The average age of these buildings is 81 years old.

The most common state of good repair problems involve malfunctioning mechanical equipment, leaky roofs, overburdened electrical distribution systems, and a lack of accessibility for the elderly and physically disabled, though many more haven’t been renovated in decades and suffer from missing or deteriorating ceiling panels, old carpeting and a lack of ventilation and light as well. In all, 64 branches across the city need HVAC repairs or replacements, 55 need roof repairs, 55 need to be made ADA compliant, 35 need boiler repairs or replacements, 32 need electrical system upgrades, and 23 need new elevators.³

In many cases, these basic infrastructure shortcomings cause serious service disruptions. At the Brighton Beach branch in southern Brooklyn, for example, staff members have to move a bank of computers in the adult collection every time it rains because of a leak in the ceiling. And at Brooklyn Heights, the doors are often closed early because the HVAC system can’t keep the interior temperature at a comfortable level. “Extreme temperature imbalances exist all year long,” says assistant business librarian Paul Otto, “and frequently trigger customer complaints [even when we don’t have to close].”

While service disruptions like these happen in all five boroughs, Brooklyn has undoubtedly lost the most service hours from extreme temperatures and other serious infrastructure emergencies. In 2013, Brooklyn branches experienced 140 unplanned closures, adding up to ap-

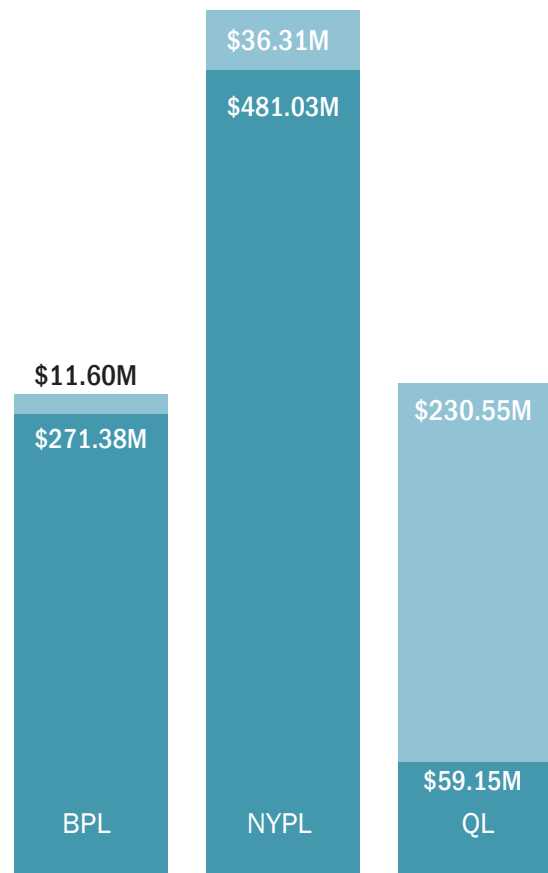
New York City’s three library systems have

**\$1.1 BILLION
IN CAPITAL NEEDS**

59 BRANCHES
*across the city
each have \$5 million
or more in capital needs*

3. Capital Needs by Library System

- EXPANSIONS/NEW CONSTRUCTION/ACQUISITION
- STATE OF GOOD REPAIR



SOURCE: Charts 1-3 – Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning’s Zoning and Land Use application

“ These are ideal spaces for after-school programming but unless they have walls replaced and other capital needs addressed we can’t use them.

proximately 540 service hours. Eleven branches were forced to close for two or more days. Most recently, the New Lots branch in East New York lost nearly two weeks in January and February when its 57-year-old boiler finally stopped working.

Meanwhile, over two dozen branch buildings, particularly in Manhattan and the Bronx, are warehousing large rooms—or even entire floors in some cases—that could be used for patron services if they had the funds to modernize the core infrastructure in these spaces. At least 14 branches—11 in Manhattan alone—have empty custodial apartments averaging 1,000 square feet on their top floors, and over a dozen have empty or underutilized basements or third floors that could be reactivated if they were brought back up to code. “These are ideal spaces for after-school programming,” says George Mihaltzes, NYPL’s vice president of community and government affairs, “but unless they have walls replaced and other capital needs addressed we can’t use them.”

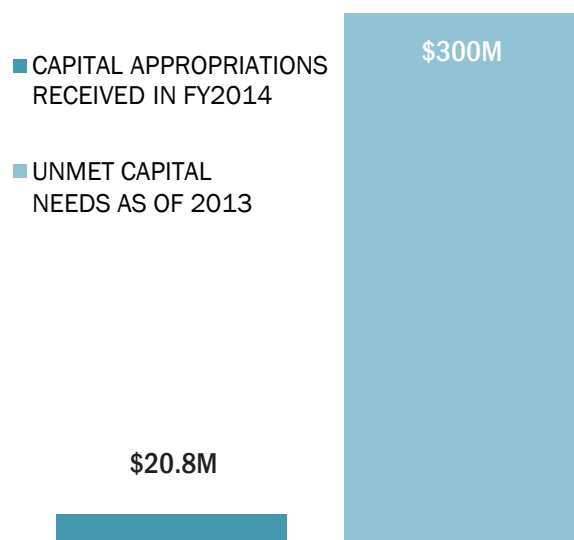
Reconfiguring layouts and adding basic service amenities to meet modern usage patterns and needs is another widespread problem. Far too many branches struggle to provide enough space for people to sit down and plug in their laptops and other mobile devices, for example. Out of the 45 branches we visited for our site surveys, 58 percent (or 26 locations) had plugs for ten devices or fewer, and 18 percent (or eight locations) had plugs for just one or none at all. In some cases, even very popular branches had a dearth of electrical outlets for patrons working on their own devices. The McKinley Park branch in southern Brooklyn, which ranks in the top ten citywide in both circulation and visits, doesn’t have a single place for patrons to plug in. In Queens, the popular Jackson Heights branch can accommodate only three devices at any one time, and all of those outlets are clustered in just one corner of the library.

Yet another thing most libraries are struggling to provide is sufficient space for onsite activities, whether

it is providing enough seating for people to sit down at a desk, or physically separated rooms for classes and workshops. In our survey of librarians, not being able to accommodate onsite activities registered time and again as a top complaint. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that their community rooms were insufficient to meet patron needs; 74 percent said they lacked sufficient space to ensure a quiet working environment; and 60 percent said their branch struggled to support people who wanted to work in groups. “These old buildings weren’t made for people to stay and hang out,” notes Leslie Tabor, the branch manager at NYPL’s Yorkville branch on the Upper East Side. “So people come in, can’t find a seat and leave. It’s hard to draw in new people when there’s nowhere for them to sit.”

Many of the city’s libraries are simply too small to meet the demands placed on a full-service neighborhood library. Across the five boroughs, 100 branch buildings are 10,000 square feet or smaller, and 75 of those are less than 8,000 square feet. Although small buildings pose problems in every borough, it is an especially big challenge in Queens, which has fewer of the older, larg-

4. Brooklyn Public Library: Capital Needs vs Funding



er Carnegie-era buildings and more of the shoebox-style structures built during Mayor John Lindsay’s administration (1966-1973). In all, Queens has 41 buildings with fewer than 10,000 square feet, compared to 26 in Brooklyn, 14 in the Bronx, seven in Staten Island and only six in Manhattan. “Our biggest challenge capital-wise is expanding the size of some of these small Lindsay boxes,” says Frank Genese, the Queens Library’s vice president of capital and facilities management. “It’s a real challenge squeezing a full-service library into some of these spaces.” Of the \$278 million for acquisitions and new construction citywide, \$231 million is for expansions and replacement buildings in Queens.

Though postage-stamp-sized buildings sometimes excel in some service areas, they all have to sacrifice essential services in order to prioritize others. Some prioritize programming over quiet seating, for example, by holding many of their events in the main reading room, while others prioritize table seating and computers, even if their small space prevents them from providing enough of it. The popular McKinley Park and Rego Park branches, for example, both offer comparatively few programs, because so much of their building is already being used for shelving, seating and administrative space.

While many branches need to be expanded, rebuilt or renovated, there are opportunities to activate inefficient and outmoded spaces at a number of the city’s older libraries—if funds were available to build out those spaces. Though many of the earliest libraries were built with reading tables and auditoriums for lectures, the vast majority of the city’s older branches, even from as late as the 1990s, were designed first and foremost around their

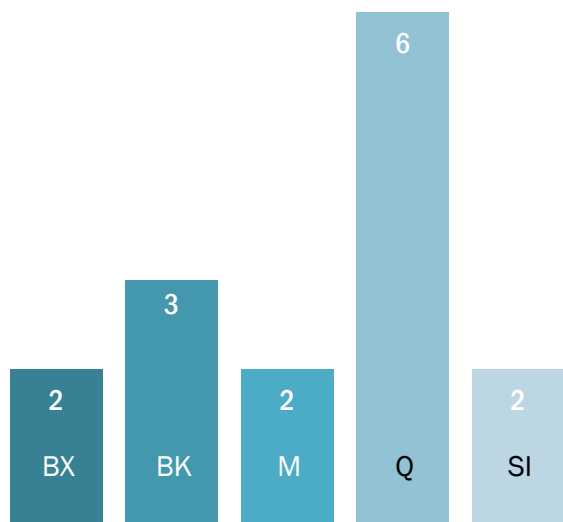
book collection and use extensive amounts of their space for shelving and book processing. To say nothing of the closed-off rooms and custodial apartments in many NYPL buildings, many libraries are outfitted with clerical rooms, book sorting and labeling rooms, offices for the branch librarian and children’s librarian, staff lounges and even book sale rooms where old best sellers were stored (and sold) when they were taken out of circulation.

Many of the newest libraries built in New York and around the world designate comparatively little of their building for non-public uses. No New York library built since 2000, for instance, uses more than 30 percent of its building for maintenance and administration, and most use significantly less than that. (The new Mariner’s Harbor branch on Staten Island uses just 12 percent of its building for non-patron purposes.) But many of the city’s older branches are not nearly as efficient in their allocation of space. Outside of the central libraries for Brooklyn and Queens, which have significant space needs for systemwide administrative staff, 77 different branches across the city use 30 percent or more of the building for behind-the-scenes purposes, and 26 of those use 40 percent or more in that way. Collectively, these buildings house over 155,000 square feet of space beyond the 30 percent threshold of their more modern peers.

Despite their rising performance indicators, New York City’s libraries are neither in a state of good repair nor keeping up with the needs of 21st-century users. The main driver of this status quo is insufficient funding. Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, the city spent \$503.7 million on capital improvements for the city’s public libraries, a woefully insufficient amount given the overwhelming infrastructure needs, age of the branches and increasing number of New Yorkers using these resources.

Beyond inadequate funding levels, however, the libraries are hamstrung by a broken system that bases funding levels on the decisions of individual elected officials rather than an empirical assessment of building needs. While it grants them some level of independence, the nonprofit status of the three systems (rather than being city agencies) positions them poorly for securing their place among mayoral priorities. Though parks, schools, cultural institutions and other city entities receive significant amounts of their capital funding from the discretionary funds of individual City Council members and

5. New Library Branches Built In the Past 20 Years



SOURCE: Charts 4-5 – Brooklyn Public Library; 2014 Adopted Capital Budget. Of the \$20.8 million in capital funds received in fiscal year 2014, \$7.5 million was provided by the City Council and \$13.3 million was provided by other sources. Chart 5 - Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library and Queens Library. Numbers indicate branch locations.

Mott Haven, Bronx. Many branches across the city struggle to provide enough seating for patrons.



“
People come in, can't find a seat and leave. It's hard to draw in new people when there's nowhere for them to sit.

borough presidents, the libraries receive a *majority* of their funding this way. Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, 59 percent of the libraries' capital commitments came from City Council and the borough presidents, and only 41 percent came from the administration. Of all city agencies, only the Department for the Aging comes close to this level of dependence on the discretionary funding process, with 53 percent of its capital funds coming from borough presidents and City Council. In the same ten year period, the Department of Parks and Recreation received 21 percent of its capital funding this way, and the Department of Cultural Affairs 41 percent.⁴

What's more, administration funding is much more likely to be for high-profile projects such as NYPL's Central Library Plan for the landmark Schwarzman building on 42nd Street. More than half of the administration's \$257 million in appropriations since fiscal year 2010, for example, were directed toward that single project, though NYPL has since decided to change course and use a majority of those funds to renovate the Mid-Manhattan library, which has \$100 million in repair needs.

Raising funds through the discretionary process requires the library systems to prioritize projects and shop them around to local elected officials, starting with the local City Council representative and the borough president and ending with the Council speaker and mayor at the very end of the process. Unlike agencies such as the Department of Transportation or the Department of Education, which negotiate funds directly with the administration for systematic improvements (e.g. road resurfacing by lane miles, school expansions by seats), the libraries can't assume that basic repair and expansion needs will be met. And while some lump-sum appropriations have

started to be made, they are not consistent enough for libraries to rely on them for capital planning.

Since a lot can ride on the willingness and interest of local representatives, and since in some districts libraries have to compete with higher-profile projects from cultural groups or parks, funding levels can vary widely from borough to borough and district to district. As our analysis of the last five years of capital appropriations shows, some boroughs have received more support from local representatives than others. Between fiscal years 2010 and 2014, Queens received \$50 million from Borough President Helen Marshall and \$56.9 million from the City Council. By comparison, Brooklyn received only \$4.4 million from Borough President Marty Markowitz and \$30.4 million from the City Council during the same period. In fiscal year 2014, despite \$300 million in unmet capital needs, Brooklyn received just \$7.5 million in capital funds from the City Council and \$13.5 million from all other sources.

As a result of this broken funding system, New York has only built 15 new or replacement libraries in the past 20 years. Since 1995, when it built two branches, Brooklyn has managed to build just one new library and fully renovate eight others. This is wholly inadequate when the average library in the city is over 61 years old.

Other cities across the country have made their aging libraries a priority and have invested hundreds of millions in rebuilding and replacing them. Over the last 20 years, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco have all launched capital improvement campaigns resulting in new or fully renovated libraries for over half of their physical plant. In Seattle, the library passed an ambitious ballot initiative with more than 70 percent approval so that it could build a new 340,000 square-foot central li-

As a new administration turns its attention to quality neighborhoods, affordability and skills development for those New Yorkers who have fallen behind in today's knowledge economy, there is a strong rationale for making a large capital investment in the city's libraries.

library and renovate or rebuild every branch in its system. Ninety percent of the branch libraries in LA, 88 percent in San Francisco and 75 percent in Chicago were either renovated or rebuilt as part of those cities sustained capital campaigns. Though construction on new branches has just begun, the Columbus Metropolitan Library launched a campaign in 2010 to more than double its overall footprint by the year 2030. As in Seattle, the library's proposed ballot initiative won the support of more than 65 percent of voters, despite the sour economy. In Chicago, former Mayor Richard M. Daley tied library investments to broader community development goals, replacing vacant lots and liquor stores with new library buildings.

New York City's charter doesn't allow the libraries to take a capital improvement plan directly to voters, though given the results from other cities one suspects it would have an excellent chance of passing if it did. But the Bloomberg administration's approach to cultural groups could serve as a model for what might be done if the de Blasio administration were to make libraries a priority. Between 2004 and 2013, the Bloomberg administration spent \$2.1 billion on cultural facilities, or roughly double what his predecessor spent over the ten years prior to that.⁵ Increased capital spending on cultural groups made sense for an administration that was trying to position New York as a prominent tourism destination as well as a global capital for finance, law, advertising, media and technology, since world-class art museums and theaters are an enormous draw for both high-end talent and tourists. But as a new administration turns its attention to quality neighborhoods, affordability and skills development for those New Yorkers who have fallen behind in today's knowledge economy, there is a strong rationale for making a similarly large capital investment in the city's libraries. Embedded in communities, these comparative-

ly small buildings may keep a modest profile, but they are enormously important to neighborhoods in need of strong civic spaces, students in need of after-school enrichment, and adult learners in need of literacy training.

Doubling capital spending on libraries over the next ten years would add up to approximately \$1.1 billion, or enough to significantly rebuild over 100 libraries across the city, including all the libraries most in need. But the de Blasio administration and City Council shouldn't stop there. They should do what cities from Chicago to Seattle have done and undertake a comprehensive campaign to modernize services and put the libraries on a more sustainable path for the millions of patrons who depend on them. This would not only bring more of the branches into a state of good repair, it would unleash their potential for community development and individual economic empowerment.

As we detail in the blueprint at the end of this report, a comprehensive ten-year capital plan and vision for the libraries would reform and clarify the capital funding process, strengthen the management of capital projects, and create operating efficiencies by further consolidating the libraries' book processing and delivery activities. Rather than continuing the time-consuming and piecemeal approach to renovations that has led to such disappointing results over the last ten years, this new approach would allow the libraries to create a more predictable pipeline of major projects and serve as a catalyst for common-sense reforms in the approvals and contracting process. A comprehensive and well-funded capital plan would give the city an opportunity to better leverage libraries for the administration's affordable housing, resiliency and community development agendas: In the blueprint, for example, we identify ten library properties that could support significant new affordable housing developments

and provide several examples of how library investments could be tied to nearby developments in order to support a stronger, more inclusive community.

Moreover, a capital plan that came with guaranteed funds would finally allow the libraries to do more long-term planning of their own. Not only would the libraries be able to open up hundreds of thousands of square feet of underutilized space, they would be given a chance to more clearly articulate the network of services they offer and how they are distributed between the branches. Larger hubs could support smaller neighborhood branches with a more comprehensive set of services and longer hours, and small retail branches could help them affordably expand their footprint in underserved neighborhoods. These outposts could serve as pick-up locations for online book orders while using the vast majority of their space for onsite services targeted at specific community

needs. Just as important, the libraries would be able to clarify their role vis-à-vis other city agencies, particularly the Department of Education but also the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of Youth and Community Development, the Department for the Aging and the Department of Small Business Services. They also would be able to build relationships with community partners through a more deliberate and strategic community engagement process.

Unlike other cities across the country, New York has not thought strategically about these critical community assets—much less developed a comprehensive plan that could address their many inefficiencies—since Andrew Carnegie’s initial donation at the beginning of the last century. With this blueprint, we hope to start a conversation that will change that.

Blueprint for Modernizing New York’s Branch Libraries

We recommend that the following steps be taken by city officials, library administrators and other stakeholders. Detailed recommendations can be found in Part II of this report.

FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT

- Create and finance a citywide capital plan to bring NYC libraries into the 21st century.
- Create a “Director of Libraries” inside City Hall.
- Give the libraries a capital budget to create a pipeline of repair and expansion projects.
- Package similar capital projects into a single contract and bid.
- Pool discretionary allocations to form a library innovation fund for each borough.
- Reduce construction costs and delays for new and renovated libraries.
- Refine and standardize the city’s interpretations of capital eligibility requirements for libraries.
- Revisit capital eligibility rules and expense funding formulas to cover rising Information Technology costs.
- Continue to invest in floating collections and consolidate management operations.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Tie library investments to larger community development initiatives.
- Create opportunities for community involvement in the design of new libraries.

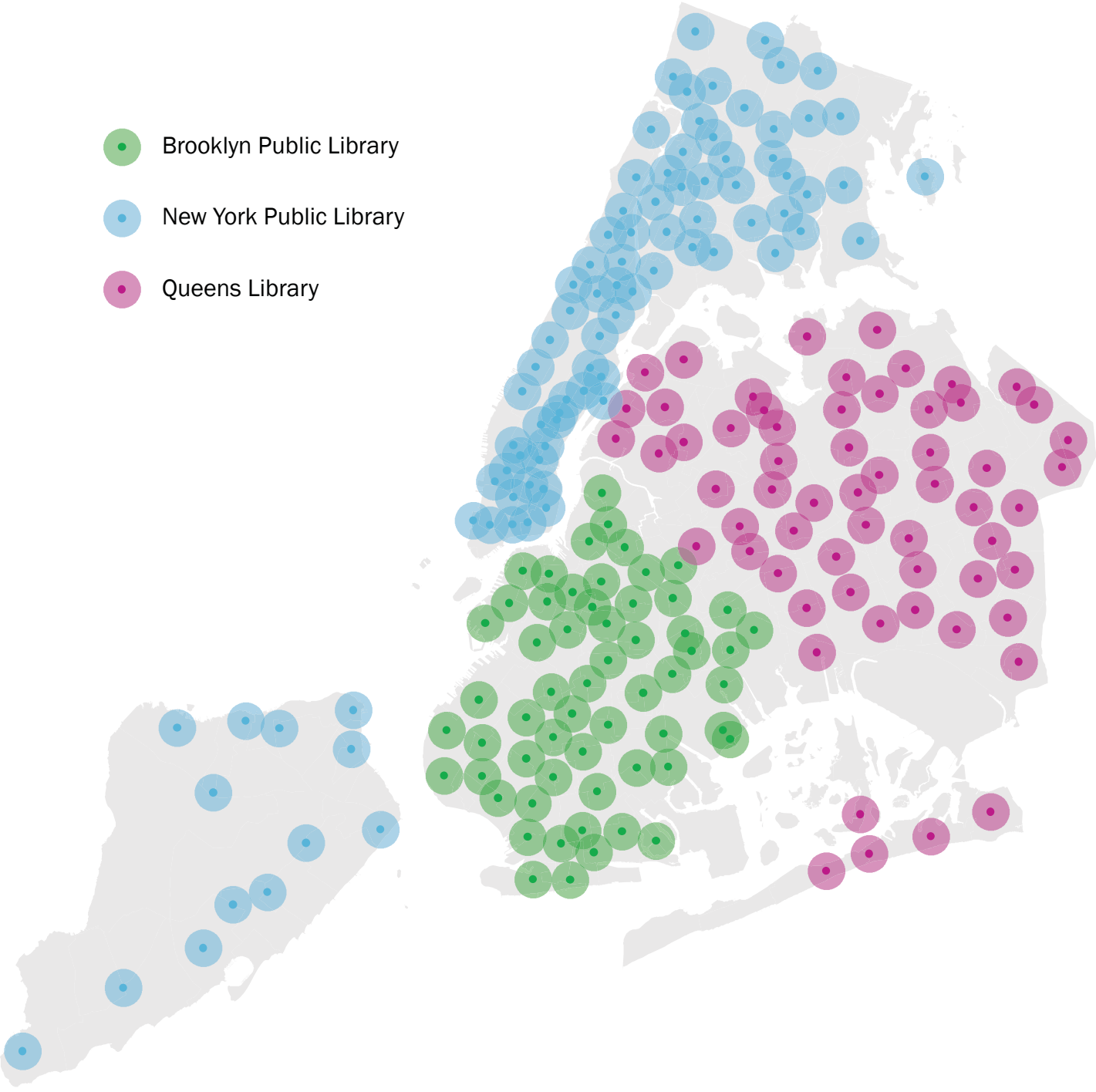
- Invest in spaces that facilitate and even encourage outside partnerships.
- Make libraries a stronger presence in their communities.
- Make libraries partners in community resilience planning.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

- Maximize public space.
- Maximize flexibility.
- Prioritize electrical system upgrades to increase the number of outlets.
- Invest in library hubs that can anchor services for nearby locations.
- Co-develop libraries with affordable housing.
- Invest in joyful spaces.
- Use outdoor spaces more effectively to create opportunities for programming and civic engagement.
- Expand the libraries’ footprint with storefront spaces in retail corridors and transit centers.
- Develop branches and spaces designed specifically for freelance workers.
- Find spaces to test out new ideas and services.

Mapping New York's Branch Libraries

The map below shows where New York City's 207 public library branches are located. The shaded circles indicate a half mile radius.



KEY FINDINGS

NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDINGS ARE VERY OLD.

- The average branch library in New York City is 61 years old, with the oldest buildings concentrated in Manhattan, where the average age is 84, and Brooklyn where it is 65. In Staten Island the average age of library buildings is 61, in the Bronx 57 and in Queens 47.
- A quarter of the city's libraries—52 branches—are at least 100 years old. 159 branches are at least 40 years old.
- Only 15 new library buildings have been built in the past 20 years. Six of these newest buildings are in Queens.
- Much of the city's library development occurred during two eras: the Carnegie era (1902–1929), when 54 of today's branches were built, mostly through a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, and Mayor John Lindsay's administration (1966–1973), when 53 branches were designed or built.

THE LIBRARIES' AGING INFRASTRUCTURE, COMBINED WITH DECADES OF INSUFFICIENT CITY CAPITAL FUNDING, HAS RESULTED IN A MAINTENANCE CRISIS.

- The three library systems have identified nearly \$1.1 billion in capital needs, of which about \$812 million is needed simply to keep their buildings in good working condition. The remaining \$278 million is for new construction and branch expansions.
- Fifty-nine branches have \$5 million or more in repair needs.
- Across the city, 64 branches need HVAC repairs or replacements, 55 need roof repairs, 55 need to be made ADA compliant, 35 need boiler repairs or replacements, 32 need electrical system upgrades, and 23 need new elevators.
- Brooklyn libraries are in particularly bad shape: 51 of the system's 59 branch buildings (or 86 percent) have over \$1 million in state of good repair needs. Mainly due to malfunctioning heating and cooling systems, the borough's branches had 140 unplanned closures, adding up to 540 lost service hours, in 2013.

TOO MANY LIBRARY BRANCHES ARE NOT CONFIGURED TO ADEQUATELY MEET THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S PATRONS.

- At a time when computers and mobile devices are required for even basic work or study, most libraries don't have enough functional and accessible electrical outlets for users on their devices. Of the 45 libraries we visited, 26 had 10 outlets or fewer.
- The libraries' community rooms are often unable to accommodate the growing demand for classes, homework help, after-school programs and other important library activities. The rooms they do have for programming often double as storage, need repairs, and lack sufficient equipment, such as Wi-Fi and furniture.
- In our survey of more than 300 librarians across the five boroughs, 86 percent said that their community rooms are insufficient to meet the needs of patrons.
- Although libraries are asked to support a greater number and variety of activities, their spaces have not adapted to meet these demands. Seventy-four percent of our survey respondents said they needed more quiet space, and 60 percent said they couldn't adequately accommodate people working in groups,
- Many libraries simply don't have enough seating to accommodate the increasing number of patrons looking for a place to sit down and work. Twenty-two of the 45 branches we visited in our site surveys had seating for fewer than 50 people. McKinley Park in Brooklyn and Jackson Heights in Queens each have over 375,000 annual visitors, but McKinley Park can only seat 48 patrons and Jackson Heights 76.

THE MAJORITY OF LIBRARY BRANCHES ARE SIMPLY TOO SMALL TO ACCOMMODATE THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR ONSITE ACTIVITIES.

- The average size of New York City's branch libraries, excluding the much larger Mid-Manhattan Library and the Brooklyn and Queens central libraries, is 12,200 square feet.
- One hundred of the city's 207 branches are 10,000 square feet or smaller; 75 branches are under 8,000 square feet.

- Queens has the largest share of small branches—41 are under 10,000 square feet, compared with 26 in Brooklyn, 14 in the Bronx, seven in Staten Island and six in Manhattan.

THE LACK OF SPACE IN MOST CITY BRANCHES IS EXACERBATED BY THE OFTEN INEFFICIENT USE OF SPACE.

- Seventy-seven branches use 30 percent or more of their space for utilities and administrative purposes, while 26 branches use 40 percent or more.
- No New York City library built since 2000 uses more than 30 percent of its space for administration and utilities, and many newer libraries use 20 percent or less for these purposes.
- Fourteen branches have custodial apartments averaging 1,000 square feet that have been shuttered for decades. Twelve other branches have unused basements, rooms or entire floors.
- In order to open up these spaces, major renovations are necessary to bring them up to code and make them ADA accessible.

CAPITAL FUNDING LEVELS FOR LIBRARIES HAVE BEEN WOEFULLY INSUFFICIENT TO COVER BASIC BUILDING NEEDS.

- Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, the city spent \$503.7 million on capital improvements for public libraries. Although that sum represented an increase over the ten years prior, it has not come close to meeting the libraries' extensive needs. Of the libraries' \$1.1 billion in current capital priorities, all but a very few have still not received any capital funding.
- Despite having over \$300 million in state of good repair needs, the Brooklyn Public Library received just \$20.9 million in capital funds in fiscal year 2014.
- Due to insufficient funding, all three libraries have to depend on the City Council and the borough presidents for a majority of their capital funds. Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, the Brooklyn Public Library received just \$39 million in capital funds from the mayor. Over the same ten year period, the Queens Library received \$43 million and NYPL \$99 million from the mayor.

CAPITAL FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES IS LARGELY BASED ON A DISCRETIONARY, POLITICAL PROCESS, CREATING AN INSUFFICIENT AND HAPHAZARD PATTERN OF REPAIR.

- Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, 59 percent of the libraries' capital commitments came from the City Council and borough presidents, and only 41 percent came from the mayor. No other city agency relies so heavily on the discretionary dollars of City Council members and borough presidents.
- While parks, senior centers, cultural institutions and other city entities also receive capital dollars from borough presidents and council members, only the public libraries receive a majority of their capital allotment from discretionary sources.
- The discretionary process leads to enormous geographic discrepancies in funding. Between fiscal years 2010 and 2014, libraries in Queens received \$50 million in capital funds from its borough president. Over the same period, Bronx libraries received just \$5.6 million from its borough president, Brooklyn libraries \$4.4 million, Manhattan libraries \$3 million and Staten Island libraries \$511,000.

DELAYS AND HIGH COSTS MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO REPAIR AND MODERNIZE LIBRARIES.

- According to data collected by NYPL, the average duration for major renovations that are managed by the city is 6.69 years, compared to 1.97 years when similarly sized projects are managed by NYPL itself.
- The total cost per square feet for city-managed renovations is \$616, compared to \$412 for NYPL-managed projects of similar size and scope. City-managed new construction costs \$1,262 per square foot, compared to \$642 for projects managed by NYPL.
- Library projects move out of the city's commitment plan, which includes only fully funded and authorized projects, into the bidding and contracting process at a much slower rate than most other agencies. On average, just 21 percent of library projects each year move out of the commitment plan to become a registered contract with the city comptroller, compared to 45 percent for all city agencies and 32 percent for cultural groups.

AGING INFRASTRUCTURE, OVERDUE INVESTMENTS

As most New York City library buildings are old and haven't been renovated in decades, too many facilities are in a state of disrepair

MOST OF NEW YORK CITY'S 207 BRANCH LIBRARIES

are old and in need of physical upgrades just to keep the doors open and the building functioning as intended.⁶ Across the five boroughs, the average branch building is 61 years old: In Manhattan, the average age is 84, while in Brooklyn it is 65, in Staten Island 61, in the Bronx 57 and in Queens, 47.

Citywide, 159 branch buildings are at least 40 years old and 61 are at least 80 years old. A majority of buildings in every borough were built before 1974, but in some boroughs the branches are considerably older. For example, in Manhattan, 62 percent of the branches were built before 1916, and 79 percent before 1965. In Brooklyn, 29 percent of the branches were built before 1916, and 69 percent before 1965.

Just 15 out of 207 library facilities across the city have been built in the past 20 years, including two in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, three in Brooklyn and six in Queens.⁷ Only 35 library buildings have been built since 1980.

Because a majority of these libraries haven't been rebuilt or fully renovated in decades, serious mainte-

nance problems are widespread. The three library administrations have identified nearly \$1.1 billion in capital needs, spread across 178 branches, or 86 percent of their buildings. The overwhelming majority of these costs—\$812 million—is for essential repairs or interior renovation, while \$278 million is for site acquisition and new construction. Considering only the needs in the first category—which are necessary for keeping existing buildings functional rather than making them larger to meet growing demand (something we consider in more detail in the next chapter)—59 branches each have \$5 million or more in needs. These include 18 in Manhattan, 16 in Brooklyn, 16 in the Bronx, five in Staten Island and four in Queens. The average age of these buildings is 81 years.

Because size and age are such important determinants of a building's total repair needs, the branches with the highest needs by total dollar amount are concentrated in Manhattan and to a lesser extent Brooklyn, where a plurality of larger, Carnegie-era buildings are concentrated. Queens, by contrast, which has younger and significantly smaller buildings on average, has a much higher number of buildings that need to be expanded to meet

growing demand rather than renovated to keep them in a state of good repair.

Among the buildings with the highest price tags, Mid-Manhattan, which has never been renovated since becoming a library in 1961 and has over 154,000 square feet, has approximately \$100 million in needs, while Brooklyn’s Central Library, at 353,000 square feet, has nearly \$68 million in needs. Larger Carnegies, like Manhattan’s three-story Fort Washington and 125th Street branches and Brooklyn’s Pacific branch, typically have high price tags of \$6.5 million or more. However, controlling for size, one can see that buildings across all five boroughs, both large and small, are in dire condition. Of the top 20 branches by capital needs per square foot, six are in Brooklyn, four in the Bronx, five in Manhattan, three in Staten Island and two in Queens. Eleven of these are at least 80 years old, while all but one is at least 40 years old.

Although deteriorating ceilings, walls, flooring, and furniture are common problems, the most serious and highest-priced repair needs include heating and cooling systems (so-called HVACs), windows and doors, roofs, boilers, elevators and electrical system upgrades. Sixty-four branches across the city need HVAC repairs or replacements, which will run anywhere from \$200,000 to \$3.6 million, depending on how extensive the system is and what needs to be done to repair or install it. Fifty-five branches need roof replacements or repairs; 55 branches need renovations to be fully ADA-compliant; 35 need boiler repairs or replacements; at least 32 need electrical system upgrades and 23 need new elevators.

In many if not most cases, these basic maintenance and repair needs are limiting the libraries’ ability to fully serve their communities. For example, due to a leaky roof, heavy April rains recently flooded the stairwells at the New Lots branch in East New York, which now needs about \$5.3 million to replace its roof, HVAC system and windows, install an elevator and renovate the interior.

According to the branch manager at the Sheepshead Bay branch—which needs \$6.1 million to fix its roof, HVAC, windows, and exterior drainage system—heavy rains created a moat around the branch during a recent event celebrating Russian literature and culture. “There’s no drainage,” says branch manager Svetlana Negrimovskaya, “so the water was up to our shins. People had to pick up the children and carry them across, and everyone sat through the event with wet feet.” Inside the building, says Negrimovskaya, the faulty HVAC system combines with

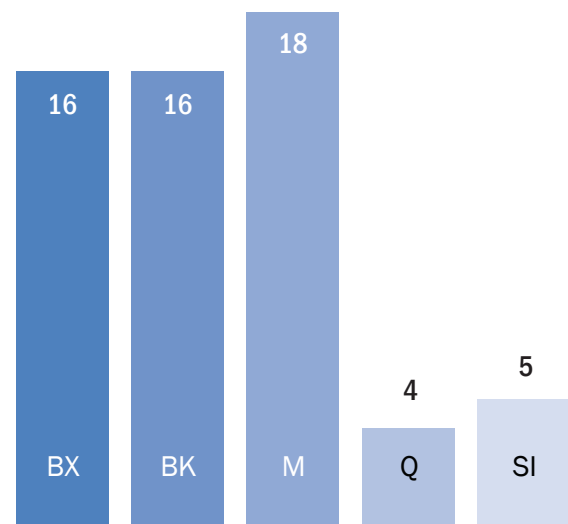
a lack of windows to create temperature and ventilation problems. The second floor houses the children’s area, she says, but the air conditioning doesn’t reach up there, making it uncomfortably hot most of the time.

Though most branch managers make do with temporary fixes, many branches have to shut their doors at some point due to poorly functioning building systems. If a leaky roof or insufficient heat or air-conditioning requires a library to close, it can’t offer latchkey kids a place to go after school, seniors a place to be mentally and physically active, or recent immigrants a place to learn English.

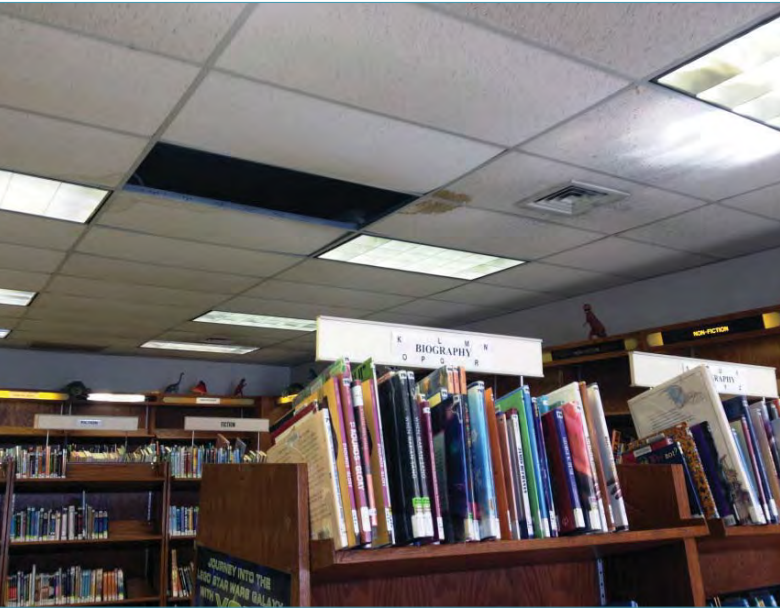
Data from the Brooklyn Public Library system shows that unplanned closures aren’t a one-off problem but a frequent occurrence that seriously impacts service delivery. In 2013, BPL saw 140 unplanned branch closures, losing about 540 library hours in all. Thirty-nine percent of the closures were for four or more hours, and 11 branches were closed for the equivalent of two days or more.

The overwhelming majority of branch closings were due to elevated heat conditions, including 62 closures due to inside temperatures of 80 degrees or higher. There were 16 closures due to insufficient heat, including four due to indoor temperatures of 58 degrees or lower. New York relies on branch libraries to be cooling centers during the hottest days of summer, and warming centers in the winter; in both cases, extreme temperatures are particularly dangerous for many seniors and other vulnerable populations. If branches have to close during these times, some neighborhoods will be without a critical health service.

1. Branches with \$5 Million+ in State of Good Repair Needs



SOURCE: Chart 1 – Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning’s Zoning and Land Use application.



Though most branch managers make do with temporary fixes, many branches have to shut their doors at some point due to poorly functioning building systems.

20 Branches With the Greatest State of Good Repair Needs per Square Foot

BRANCH	BOROUGH	YEAR BUILT	TOTAL SOGR NEEDS	TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE	SOGR NEEDS PER SQFT
Port Richmond	SI	1905	\$9M	9,429	\$955
Melrose	Bx	1914	\$9M	9,927	\$907
West New Brighton	SI	1932	\$6M	6,645	\$903
Ryder	Bk	1970	\$6.6M	7,538	\$869
125th Street	M	1904	\$11.8M	13,657	\$860
Washington Irving	Bk	1923	\$7.4M	8,691	\$851
Throg's Neck	Bx	1974	\$6.9M	8,280	\$833
Sheepshead Bay	B	1952	\$6.1M	7,672	\$795
Fort Washington	M	1914	\$12M	15,158	\$792
Van Nest	Bx	1968	\$6M	7,690	\$780
Brower Park	Bk	1963	\$4.9M	6,285	\$780
St. George	SI	1907	\$15M	19,280	\$778
Walt Whitman	B	1908	\$5.8M	7,490	\$768
Yorkville	M	1902	\$10M	13,187	\$758
Muhlenberg	M	1906	\$9.8M	12,953	\$757
Wakefield	Bx	1938	\$8M	10,863	\$736
East Flushing	Q	1977	\$5.4M	7,500	\$724
Ottendorfer	M	1884	\$6M	8,332	\$720
McKinley Park	Bk	1959	\$5.4M	7,639	\$707
Whitestone	Q	1971	\$5.3M	7,500	\$701

Source: Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning's Zoning and Land Use application

Unplanned closures also cause last-minute program cancelations. The Brooklyn Heights and Business and Career Libraries (BCL), which are housed in the same building, ultimately decided to reduce hours this summer in order to minimize disruptions caused by the building's faulty HVAC system. In 2013, the business library had nearly 1,000 programs that were attended by over 13,000 people, and held over 300 one-on-one business counseling sessions, but the library will be forced to reduce those numbers this year because it will be open fewer hours.

In many other cases, maintenance issues disturb library services without causing the branch to close. In addition to the quantitative data we received from the three library systems about their physical plants, we conducted site surveys at 45 branches and surveyed 302 library staff members to better understand how patrons are using libraries and whether a branch's physical space facilitates or hinders these uses. These surveys brought to light a multitude of service disruptions, including one library that had water from a leaky ceiling collecting in a bucket in the middle of the floor and one that was using fans to combat poor ventilation.

One unexpectedly big problem that our surveys brought to light is the sad state of many branch bathrooms, a basic necessity for anyone doing more than picking up a book. Of the 45 libraries we visited, 12 had inadequate bathrooms, including eight that were too small and clearly not wheelchair accessible. At Jefferson Market in Greenwich Village, patrons are only allowed to use the bathroom if they have a child with them. And basement-level bathrooms, like the one at Forest Hills, present a real safety challenge for librarians, as they can't be easily monitored. Basement-level bathrooms exist in Carnegie buildings like Yorkville in Manhattan and Pacific in Boerum Hill, as well as in many 1950s-era branches such as New Utrecht in southern Brooklyn.

At a time when the city's senior population is growing faster than any other group, a lack of accessibility is yet another problem that limits library services. In all, 13 branches across the city are not wheelchair accessible at all, and 32 others are only partially accessible. Many of the Carnegie buildings were built with elevated first floors, and while the three systems have been installing ramps incrementally, some branches like Astoria in Queens, Yorkville on the Upper East Side, and Leonard in Williamsburg remain completely inaccessible to wheelchairs. Other branches are accessible from the front

SOURCE: Chart 2 – Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library and Queens Library.

11 BRANCHES

in Brooklyn were forced to close for two or more days in 2013 due to maintenance issues

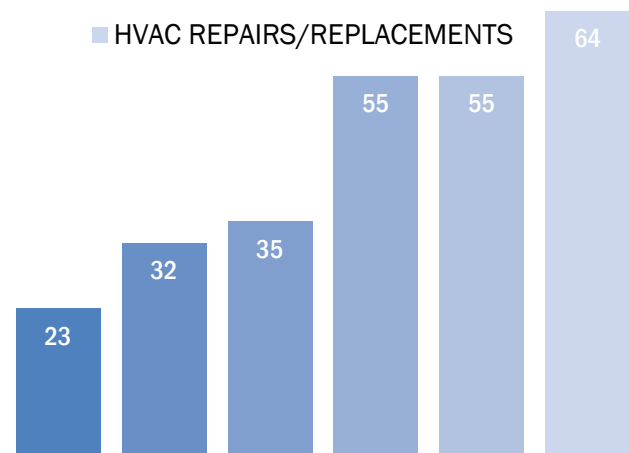
Top 5 Unplanned Branch Closures in Brooklyn in 2013

BRANCH	DAYS AFFECTED	TOTAL HOURS CLOSED
Clinton Hill	19	100.75
Brooklyn Heights/BCL	21	88.75
Flatlands	9	44.75
Flatbush	11	43
Brownsville	6	42
Total	66	319.25

Source: Brooklyn Public Library.

2. Most Common Repair Needs at NYC Library Branches

- ELEVATOR REPAIR/INSTALLATION
- ELECTRICAL SYSTEM UPGRADE
- BOILER REPAIR/REPLACEMENT
- ADA COMPLIANCE
- ROOF REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS
- HVAC REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS



door but lack elevators to the other floors, limiting use of community rooms, bathrooms, and other important amenities. “Our branch’s meeting room is located on the upper level,” says one librarian in our survey. “We have no escalator or elevator for people who have problems with stairs, especially seniors or parents with strollers.”

In addition to these more serious needs, our site surveys documented dozens of instances of physical wear and tear inside the libraries, which can have a significant impact on the building’s atmosphere as a place to work or study. These included missing and deteriorating ceiling panels at Brighton Beach, Sheepshead Bay, and Brower Park; old carpeting at Spuytn Duyvil in the Bronx; peeling paint at South Beach in Staten Island; worn linoleum flooring at Francis Martin in the Bronx; and myriad examples of insufficient seating, run-down community rooms, and a general lack of accessible outlets for those who want to plug in their own devices, as we will consider in more detail in the following chapter.

Our branch’s meeting room is located on the upper level. We have no escalator or elevator for people who have problems with stairs, especially seniors or parents with strollers.



“Carnegies” versus “Lindsay Boxes”

Two prolific eras of library development produced the two most common building types for branch libraries in New York, the so-called Carnegie branches, built between 1902 and 1929, through a donation of the Andrew Carnegie Corporation, and the so-called Lindsay boxes designed or built during Mayor John Lindsay’s administration (1966-1973). Although every borough has at least a few Carnegies, they are concentrated in Brooklyn and Manhattan: Manhattan has 19, Brooklyn 18, the Bronx six, Queens four, and Staten Island four. The Carnegie branches were almost all designed by just three architectural firms (McKim, Mead and White; Carrere and Hastings; and Babb, Cook and Willard), and often share the same general floor plans and styles. These libraries tend to be larger than most other branches, averaging 13,600 square feet, with high ceilings and large windows creating grand interiors and a strong sense of place. They are the archetypal library-as-temple, inducing a sense of reverence for books and learning. However, these same features make the buildings difficult to staff because they lack clear sightlines, usually have multiple floors, and are expensive to operate and maintain because of their size and tall ceilings.

The Lindsay boxes, by contrast, tend to be lower-quality construction: Many use cinder blocks, for example, have low ceilings, and lack sufficient windows, leading to bad lighting and ventilation. They are generally one story and much smaller than the Carnegies, averaging around 7,500 square feet. Still, the boxy style creates very regular shapes that make them highly flexible in terms of interior layouts and programming and provide good sightlines for staff supervision. In all, 54 branches in the city date from the Carnegie era, while 45 were either designed or built during the Lindsay years. The approximately 20 branches built in the decade just before or after the Lindsay administration share many of the same features, including the small size and boxy shape.⁸

NOT MEETING MODERN PATRON NEEDS

Designed around their book collections, most New York City libraries struggle to accommodate patrons who want to sit and work, or take part in a program

IT'S NOT JUST THAT SO MANY NEW YORK CITY LIBRARIES are old and in a state of disrepair, many are not configured to meet the needs of today's users. At a time when program attendance is skyrocketing and more people are looking for a place to sit down and work, read the paper or meet with neighbors, most branch buildings are open barely 40 hours a week and their layouts make little room available for onsite activities. Designed around their book collections, many devote a majority of their layouts to shelves and rooms for book processing; and, with an average size of just 7,500 square feet, most Lindsay boxes are simply too small to accommodate both an extensive collection and seating.

In our survey of library staff, being able to accommodate onsite activities was a widespread concern. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that their community rooms were insufficient to meet patron needs; 74 percent said they couldn't ensure a quiet working environment; and 60 percent said they struggled to accommodate people working in groups.

Meanwhile, 22 of the 45 branches we visited for our site surveys had table seating for fewer than 50 people,

and 14 branches had no soft seating (like reading chairs or couches) at all. McKinley Park and Jackson Heights are both in the top ten in visitors per year, but McKinley Park can only seat 48 patrons, and Jackson Heights can only seat 76.

Looking at the total number of reader seats, 93 percent of the branches we visited had seating for fewer than 100 people. At a time when so many New Yorkers are working as freelancers and other adult and child learners are looking to pick up new skills, this is woefully inadequate. Current metrics for library planning in other cities call for much more seating. Guidelines for new libraries in Washington, D.C, for example, call for a minimum of 200 reader seats.⁹ And according to library planning documents from Columbus and other cities, a branch in a neighborhood the size of Jackson Heights would have around 250 seats.¹⁰

Below we take a closer look at these and other ways New York City libraries are failing to accommodate modern patron needs.

Too small to accommodate onsite activities

One of the most surprising findings in our review of the libraries' physical plants was the number of very small buildings that are being used as full-service community libraries rather than just express locations. Starting in the 1990s, the Chicago Public Library started to move out of its small storefront locations into new, larger 15,000-square-foot buildings, because the old sites struggled to provide a full range of services to their communities. New York has fewer of these inherited storefronts but it still has a lot of stand-alone boxes that are nearly as small.

Across the five boroughs, 100 branch buildings are each less than 10,000 square feet, and 75 of those are less than 8,000 square feet. Once you factor in space allotted to utilities, staff and bookshelves, a branch with only 10,000 square feet has very little space left for tables and chairs, much less computer stations and community rooms that could be used for workshops and classes. Many of these small branches manage to do a lot with very little, but dozens of them are overwhelmed by the demand for programs and other onsite resources in their communities, and end up turning people away.

The McKinley Park branch in southern Brooklyn, for instance, uses a former storage room in the back of the building for most of its classes and workshops, and doesn't have nearly enough seating to accommodate all the people asking about the library's programs for children under five and English conversation workshops. "Our program stats at McKinley are lousy," says Jeanette Moy, Brooklyn's vice president for strategic planning, referring to the branch's low attendance numbers for classes, workshops and other programs. "There's no-

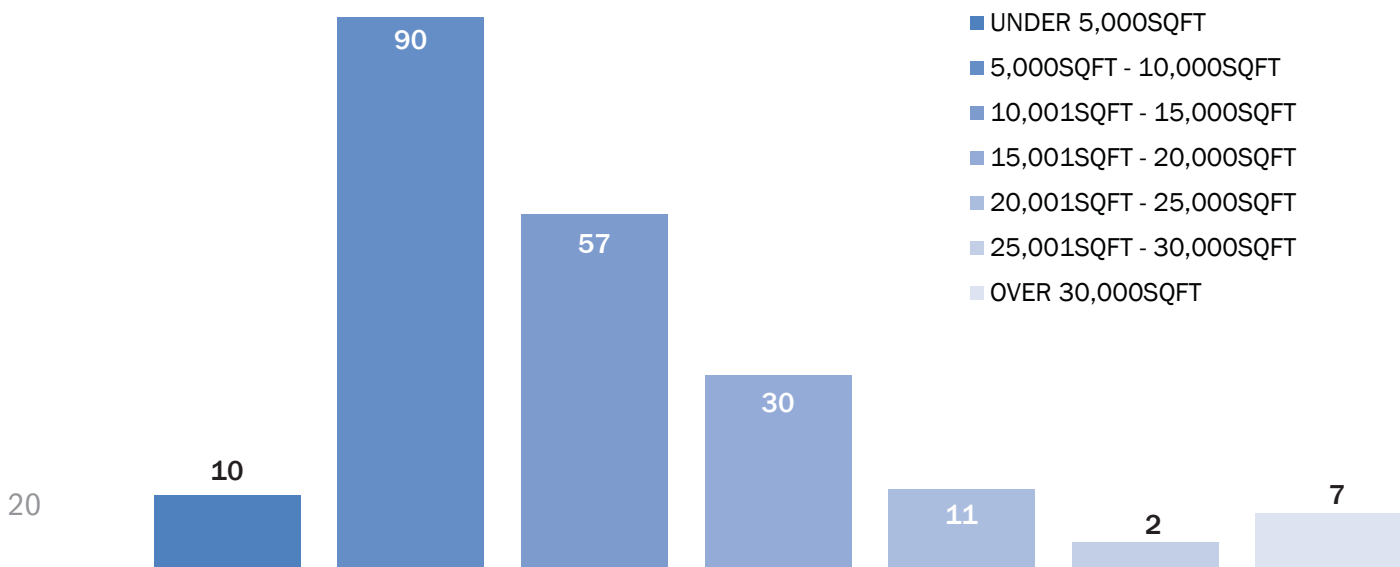
where to do the programs. But the door counts are huge."¹¹

Overall, 10 branches across the city with less than 10,000 square feet of space rank in the top quarter citywide by annual visitors. Two of those—McKinley Park (7,600 square feet) and Fresh Meadows (8,700 square feet)—are among the top circulating branches in the city. These well-attended branches would undoubtedly attract significantly more patrons for programs if they had more space for them.

Though the Brooklyn Public Library has been focused primarily on raising funds for deferred maintenance, the Queens Library has been prioritizing expansions. A significant share of Queens' physical plant was built at a time when small boxes were the library prototype of choice. Queens has 41 buildings under 10,000 square feet, compared to 26 in Brooklyn, 14 in the Bronx, seven in Staten Island and six in Manhattan. Though the popular Corona branch, a Lindsay-era bunker, underwent a small expansion in 2011, the library recently purchased an adjacent lot and is now trying to raise \$19 million for a more ambitious addition. According to Frank Genese, vice president of capital and facilities management, expansions are being proposed for Rosedale, Laurelton and Rego Park as well, and plans for a new building have already been funded for Far Rockaway. The new building—designed by the award-winning architecture firm Snohetta—will double the size of the current branch.

Although expanding these and other library buildings has staffing (and therefore expense budget) implications, dozens of branches across the city clearly need to be larger if they are going to offer a full range of services to their communities.

1. New York City Library Building Sizes



Not enough programming space

In fiscal year 2013, New York’s libraries hosted over 135,000 programs with over 2.4 million people in attendance. These ranged from after-school programs and video game nights for school-aged children to English language workshops and citizenship test classes for immigrants. Although 85 percent of New York City’s branches have at least one community room, many of these rooms are unable to accommodate the rising demand for programs like these. In our survey of more than 300 librarians across the city, only 14 percent believed that their community spaces were sufficient to meet user needs and demand. Of the 121 respondents who said that they needed a community room, 83 percent of librarians already had one, but needed another in order to meet the high demand for programming. “Every week we have more than one program at the same time,” says one survey respondent, “and we do one of them outside of the meeting room, which is very noisy.”

In Brooklyn and Queens, the median size of meeting spaces is just 591 square feet, but these range from a tiny room of under 200 square feet at Baisley Park in Queens to multiple rooms totaling over 11,000 square feet at the Brooklyn Central Library. Of the 116 branches for which we have community room data, 35 have less than 500 square feet. A 500-square-foot room can comfortably accommodate up to 33 people, depending on the activity.¹²

Far Rockaway, Highlawn, Sunnyside and McKinley Park are all extremely popular branches with high circulation and visitor numbers but lower-than-expected program attendance figures, and all of them have community rooms of around 500 square feet or less. But it’s not just size that matters; it’s the layout and design too. One survey respondent explains that despite having a sizable amount of space, the library is unable to meet the needs of small groups: “We have two large meeting rooms but nothing to offer small groups who make daily requests for space,” notes the respondent. More than simply dedicating more square footage to collaborative learning and meeting spaces, it’s important that these spaces make sense for a wide variety of purposes. In our survey, English conversation workshops, ESOL classes, GED preparation, homework help, and computer training were all mentioned as high-demand programs, and many require different furniture arrangements and amenities. Computer training and electronic resource classes need

SOURCE: Chart 1-2 – Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library and Queens Library.

591 SQUARE FEET

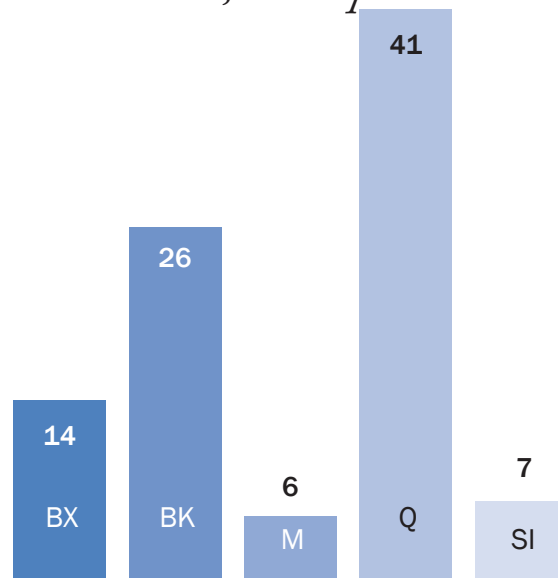
median size of meeting rooms in Brooklyn and Queens libraries

High Performing Branches Stretched for Space

BRANCH NAME	BOROUGH	TOTAL SQ FT*	FY13 VISITORS	FY13 CIRCULATION
Far Rockaway	Q	9,060	212,588	178,482
Fresh Meadows	Q	8,700	232,329	792,939
58th Street*	M	8,036	240,223	340,142
Highlawn	Bk	7,676	195,988	458,237
McKinley Park	Bk	7,639	375,284	826,190
Lefferts	Q	7,500	249,618	248,391
Rego Park	Q	7,500	210,328	265,351
Sunnyside	Q	7,500	263,163	320,766
Cortelyou	Bk	7,495	273,884	272,829
Windsor Terrace	Bk	7,462	198,016	309,207
Citywide Median		10,300	160,724	124,502

SOURCE: Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning’s Zoning and Land Use application. Square foot value is approximate.

2. Number of Branches Under 10,000 Square Feet



a classroom with computers and a projector, for instance, while formal English classes require desks and an eraser board. Accommodating different kinds of programs in a single room requires them to be adaptable. Because things must be movable and easy to reconfigure, everything from the walls and carpets to equipment and storage must be considered.

Despite the high demand for programs, five of the community rooms we visited during our site surveys were not usable. At the Walt Whitman branch, the room was filled with old furniture and a rolled up rug, and at Ryder there was a sign on the door indicating that the room was no longer accessible to the public. Other branches, particularly the small Lindsay boxes, never had proper community rooms at all. At Sheepshead Bay, the branch manager was so desperate to create a community room when she first started working there that she cleared out their storage room to use for programming. But now the room serves both as a storage space and programming space and does neither particularly well. “I dream for a spacious meeting room,” says Ms. Negrimovskaya: “This is my main concern, a room for each purpose.”

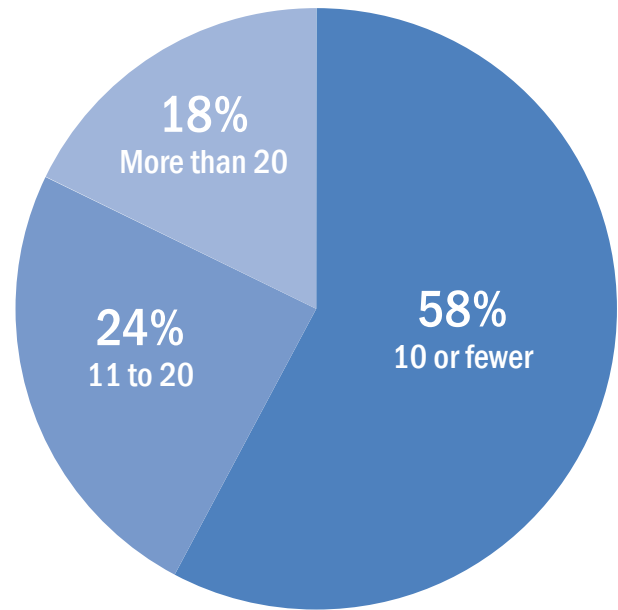
Not enough electrical outlets

At a time when laptops and mobile devices are so pervasive, and so important for completing even very basic tasks, insufficient electrical outlets are simply a deal breaker for many would-be library goers. Nevertheless, at many branches across the city there are very few if any places for people to plug in their own devices.

During our site visits to 45 different branches across the five boroughs, we counted the number of publicly accessible outlets. Our methodology was to count outlets by the number of devices that could be plugged in (i.e. a double outlet would count as two), and our criterion for accessibility was that it had to be reachable without stretching cords or moving furniture across aisles or other spaces that needed open access, as this use of outlets is generally prohibited.¹³ The results were surprising: Out of 45 branches surveyed, 58 percent had plugs for ten or fewer devices, and 18 percent had plugs for just one or none at all.

Moreover, in a number of cases, the outlets that did exist were inconveniently located or were being used by branch staff for other purposes. For example, at Todt Hill-Westerleigh on Staten Island, two outlets were powering fans for better ventilation. At the Spuyten Duyvil, Corona and Jackson Heights branches, the outlets were clustered in just one corner of the library, limiting the users

3. Survey: Electrical Outlets at Libraries



Walt Whitman, Brooklyn. Because so many branches lack sufficient electrical outlets, patrons have to be creative.

and complicating the use of space. At Corona, the assistant manager says they had to rethink their teen space at the front of the library because so many different patrons wanted to be near the only publicly accessible plugs.

At some locations, laptop users had to be resourceful. At Walt Whitman in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn, one woman with her own laptop was seated at a public access computer because there was an outlet there she could use. When another patron needed the

SOURCE: Chart 3 – Center for an Urban Future. Out of 45 branches visited, 58 percent had 10 or fewer places for patrons to plug in.

public computer, she spotted the only other outlet by a bookshelf and pulled up a chair to use the mostly empty shelf as desk space.

Our findings are supported by BPL's own survey of their branches: using the same methodology, BPL staff determined that three branches (Borough Park, McKinley Park, and Rugby) have no publicly accessible outlets at all. Eleven Brooklyn branches can only accommodate one person with a device at a time, and nearly 58 percent of their branches can accommodate fewer than ten at a time. Only five branches, most of them newer or recently renovated buildings, had over 30 places for people to plug in.

Insufficient separation between noisy and quiet activities

As libraries have become more active spaces, yet another widespread problem is creating enough space for patrons to interact and collaborate without compromising the peace and quiet many solitary workers have come to expect. Of the 253 respondents who chose to write in about the things that concern them most in our online survey, a clear plurality (40 percent) mentioned this conflict between noise and quiet.

A number of libraries have responded to this challenge by creating zones for different constituencies and activities. In addition to the spaces traditionally devoted to the children and adult collections, they've carved out spaces for teens to mingle and play on the computers, for seniors to read the paper and for freelancers and other

out-of-office workers to sit at tables. Teen spaces, in particular, are becoming more common in libraries, both in New York and across the country, since they can help attract a constituency that libraries are uniquely positioned to serve, especially now that so many extra-curricular activities are being cut from the regular school day and so many kids are in need of enrichment programs after the school day ends. Unlike schools, libraries enable teens to learn through exploration and play, allowing them to hang-out, explore new topics, play on the computers and "geek out," but without the proper facilities they can also disturb other patrons.

In the majority of our site visits the teen spaces were mostly informal or ad hoc arrangements that don't effectively separate noisier teens from the rest of the library. At the Fort Washington and Corona branches, for example, teens were assigned a space with a few chairs and young adult novels, but it was not physically divided from the rest of the library and other patrons seemed unaware that it was a specially designated area. "[The teens at our branch] seem to prefer to lounge and read on the floor," says one librarian in our survey. "That may be for the fact we only have four chairs and one table for them."

Freelancers and older students looking for a quiet place to work are two more important constituencies many libraries struggle to serve well. "The library used to be solely for quiet work," writes one respondent in our survey, "but now that we're doing (and welcoming!) louder activities, especially for teens, we don't have anywhere that people who do want to work or study quietly can go."

In the majority of our site visits the teen spaces were mostly informal or ad hoc arrangements that don't effectively separate noisier teens from the rest of the library.



Parkchester, Bronx. This branch created a "Quiet Zone" to provide a less distracting space for work and study.

Many of the city’s branches have only one floor for all of their activities, making it difficult to keep noise from traveling around the building. And the Carnegies, with their high ceilings and large rooms, echo so much that even moderate volumes can disturb other patrons. Thirty-five out of the 45 branches we visited in our site surveys did not have a designated quiet area. In many cases, while there was movement and talking, it wasn’t necessarily disturbing. But when a branch is inundated by children coming after school in the afternoon, as we saw in the Jackson Heights branch, it is impossible to maintain a good working environment in the library’s main space, which often doubles as its reading room. Only a handful of libraries had a designated quiet area that seemed to serve that purpose well. Flushing, for example, has a separate room for quiet work, Ridgewood has a comfortable mezzanine level with soft seating, and Coney Island has a quiet second floor.

In very small branches, mitigating the conflicts between quiet and noisy activities will continue to be a challenge, but a lot of other branches could do this better with more modern layouts and clever furniture arrangements, in addition to newer soundproofing materials and technologies.

Inefficient use of space

Though many branches are simply too small to accommodate modern patron needs, many more could make additional room for onsite services if their layouts were modernized. In branches across the city, more space could be created for computers, tables, soft seating, and community rooms by realizing space efficiencies and opening up thousands of square feet that are currently closed off to the public.

Not including the central libraries for Brooklyn and Queens, which have significant space needs for systemwide administration staff, 77 branches across all five boroughs use more than 30 percent of the building for non-publicly accessible purposes, while 26 branches use 40 percent or more. Collectively, these buildings house 155,300 square feet of space be-

yond that 30 percent threshold, and have nearly 67,000 square feet beyond a much more generous 40 percent threshold.

It is rare for modern branch libraries to use more than 30 percent of their building for non-patron purposes, whether for utilities or administration. The new Mariners Harbor branch in Staten Island, for instance, reserves only 12 percent of its space for behind-the-scenes uses, though it is a freestanding building with its own mechanical and IT equipment. Similarly, the Glen Oaks building in Queens, completed in 2013, has only 22 percent of its gross square footage designated as private.

*Branches with the Greatest Percent of Space Devoted to Non-Public Uses**

BRANCH NAME	BOROUGH	TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE	% NON-PUBLIC USES
Andrew Heiskell	M	43,000	69%
Mid-Manhattan	M	154,000	61%
South Jamaica	Q	13,500	56%
Brooklyn Heights	Bk	62,917	56%
Riverside	M	27,500	52%
Epiphany	M	15,289	49%
Brownsville	Bk	10,838	49%
Flatbush	Bk	21,790	45%
Walt Whitman	Bk	7,490	44%
Washington Heights	M	16,765	44%
Saratoga	Bk	10,040	44%
Queens Village	Q	12,300	43%
Hunt's Point	Bx	13,715	43%
Leonard	Bk	10,699	43%
Corona	Q	10,000	42%
Glendale	Q	10,800	42%
Grand Concourse	Bx	18,670	41%
Washington Irving	Bk	8,691	41%
Arlington	Bk	16,385	40%
Muhlenberg	M	12,953	40%

Source: Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning’s Zoning and Land Use. *Excludes Brooklyn Central and Queens Central buildings, all of which use extensive space for systemwide administration and storage. NYPL square foot values are approximate.

In the table below, several branches like Andrew Heiskell, Grand Concourse, and Richmond Hill use extensive amounts of space for systemwide administrative purposes. Andrew Heiskell uses one floor as office space for NYPL's IT staff, and Richmond Hill and Grand Concourse both house maintenance equipment used at other branches. Large portions of both Riverside (a leased space) and Brooklyn Heights are used to store archival material for the systems' research libraries. But most of the other branches have significant untapped square footage.

NYPL and BPL, in particular, no longer have any use for extensive book processing spaces, since much of that work has been outsourced to a book processing facility in Long Island City called Book Ops. At Book Ops, dedicated staff now do nearly all of the book purchasing, sorting and labeling, which frees up librarians in the branches to answer patron questions and administer public programs. "We don't need big work rooms, offices and sorting spaces anymore," says Joanna Pestka, NYPL's senior vice president of capital planning and construction. "In most cases we need a separate office for the library manager and a break room but not much more than that." According to Pestka, many of NYPL's branches have compounded the problem of too much administration space by siting that space in inappropriate areas. The Muhlenberg and Hudson Park branches in Manhattan, for example, use precious space at the very front of the library for private offices and clerical rooms.

In Queens, a lot of the branches use book return and sorting machines, typically near the entrance so that patrons can slot in books from the sidewalk outside. Though the machines allow patrons to return materials at any time of day and have the return registered on their account in real time, they are space intensive. At Corona, the machine and processing room take up a significant amount of space, approximately 400 square feet. And at Forest Hills the library had to take away a hang-out space for teens in order to fit a larger machine.

In a number of cases, branches with high private space allocations are warehousing sizable rooms—entire floors even—that could be reprogrammed for patron services if renovated and brought up to code. In the NYPL system, for example, the Epiphany, Washington Heights, Hunts Point, and Ottendorfer branches all have empty custodial apartments. Epiphany and Washington Heights both have large empty basements as well, as do Woodstock, New Amsterdam and Hamilton Grange. NYPL has targeted seven branches with significant underutilized

space that it wants to use for after-school programming—something it did at Hamilton Grange in 2011, gaining 4,400 square feet for a teen center, computer bar and performance space—but, according to administrators, the interior renovations would require extensive electrical work and remodeling and together cost \$10 million, which is currently unavailable.

Too Much Shelving

Many branches struggle to make room for patrons because so much of the building is being used for bookshelves, limiting the amount of space that can be used for tables and desks, computer stations, community rooms and other onsite uses. In a number of branches with low circulation numbers, a significant portion of the shelves are empty, but due to a lack of funds to remodel they continue to take up space in the library. While it will always be important to have books at most libraries, changes in usage should inform the amount of space dedicated to shelving.

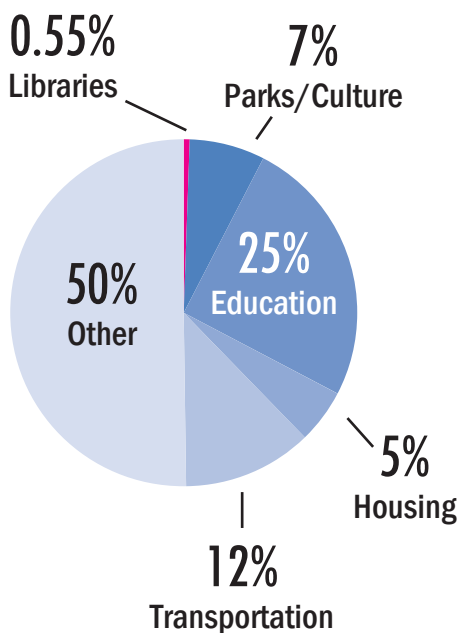
In Brooklyn, branches built between 1950 and 2000 have the most space dedicated to shelves, at about 35 percent of their public space square footage.¹⁴ Two branches, Ulmer Park and Greenpoint, built in 1963 and 1973 respectively, devote more than half of their public space to shelving. Brooklyn's Carnegie branches, by comparison, built between 1904 and 1929, devote 24 percent of their public space to shelves, while Kensington, the only branch built after 2000, uses just 16 percent of its public space for that purpose.

According to David Lankes at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, the idea that public libraries should dedicate as much space as possible to warehousing books is relatively new and may have been informed by the rapidly decreasing cost of publishing books in the 1940s and 50s. Many of the earliest public libraries in the United States made ample space for people to sit down and read or listen to a lecture; a few them even incorporated spaces for sports, like bowling alleys and billiard rooms.¹⁵ Today's libraries need to make room for computers and meeting spaces, and now that patrons can go online and have any book in the collection delivered within 24 hours, onsite collections can be reduced without compromising people's access to books.

A FRACTURED FUNDING SYSTEM

The city's piecemeal capital funding and approvals process has made it all but impossible for the libraries to repair and modernize their facilities

1. City Capital Expenditures by Agency, FY2004-FY2013



DESPITE BEING VALUABLE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS, New York City's libraries are neither in a state of good repair nor keeping up with the needs of our 21st century, information-based economy. The two interrelated drivers of this status quo are insufficient funding from the city, and the broken system that churns out paltry sums according to political whims rather than a well-considered asset management plan. The funding process for libraries is very different from the way that other city infrastructure is funded, and as we detail in the next chapter, is completely unlike the funding process for other successful, urban libraries.

Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, the city spent \$503.7 million on capital improvements for public libraries, which was a 57 percent increase over the ten years prior.¹⁶ But while capital expenditures for libraries increased under Mayor Bloomberg, this was largely the result of increased capital spending overall rather than a purposeful campaign by the administration. As a percentage of the city's total capital spending, library investments have remained fairly consistent at about one half of one percent, ranging from .43 percent under Mayors

Koch and Dinkins and .41 percent under Mayor Giuliani to .55 percent under Bloomberg.

Moreover, compared to other agencies, a much greater percentage of the libraries' capital funds come from individual City Council members and borough presidents. Between fiscal years 2004 and 2013, 59 percent of the libraries' capital commitments came through the discretionary process, while only 41 percent came from the mayor.¹⁷ Although museums, parks and schools also receive sizable capital investments from the City Council and borough presidents every year, they make up a much smaller percentage of their total capital funding. Over the same ten-year period, 41 percent of the city's capital funding for cultural groups came from individual City Council members and borough presidents, while 21 percent of funding for parks and 7 percent of funding for schools came from these sources. Among all city agencies, only the Department for the Aging, which manages the city's senior centers and receives 53 percent of its capital dollars from council members and borough presidents, comes close to the libraries' level of dependence on non-mayoral funding for capital projects.

While city agencies like the Department of Transportation negotiate directly with the administration for capital funds based on a rigorous assessment of need, the libraries have no guaranteed source of funding and have to shop their projects around to individual elected officials, starting with the local City Council representative and the borough president and ending with the Council speaker and mayor. "For mayoral agencies, the city does a good job of keeping that flow of basic infrastructure capital going," says Dall Forsythe, a government finance expert at New York University. "Often that stuff that nobody cares about politically at all, OMB and the mayor fund it. They just do it."

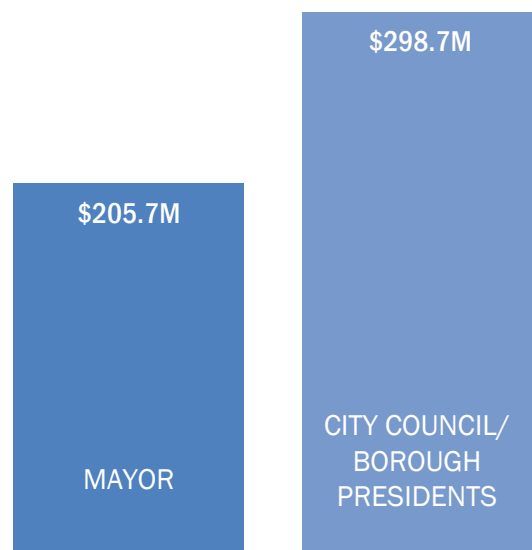
But, as Forsythe acknowledges, this is not how it works for the majority of library projects. Whereas the DOT and Department of Education both have a guaranteed capital budget that allows them to prioritize projects based on need, the libraries have to prioritize projects based on the relative levels of interest shown by elected officials and their representatives. And where the DOT and DOE negotiate for funds on a systematic basis, with so many dollars going toward road resurfacing and so many toward seat expansions, the libraries tend to negotiate on a project-by-project basis.

Relying so much on this piecemeal, largely discretionary process has several negative consequences for the libraries. First, it tends to lead to big geographic discrepancies in funding, as the libraries compete with cultural organizations, parks and schools for limited capital dollars. As an analysis of the last five years of capital appropriations shows, some boroughs have received much more support from local representatives than others. Between fiscal years 2010 and 2014, the Queens borough president gave \$50 million to library projects, while the Bronx borough president gave \$5.6 million, the Brooklyn borough president \$4.4 million, the Manhattan borough president \$3 million, and the Staten Island borough president \$511,000. Similar discrepancies exist among City Council and even mayoral appropriations: During the same period, NYPL was able to raise roughly twice as much from the mayor than either of the other two systems did, while Queens and NYPL were both able to raise significantly more than Brooklyn from City Council.

"The current system doesn't work," says Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, who chairs the Council's Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee. "The needs are far too great for individual council members to meaningfully address their branches. They can do half a million dollars here, half a million there. But the minimum to fund a state of the art library is \$20 million. There's no way for a council member to put that together."

Second, the lack of a guaranteed budget and the concomitant need to shop projects around to council

2. *Capital Commitments to NYC Libraries by Source, FY2004-FY2013*



SOURCE: Chart 1 – Office of the New York City Comptroller. Chart 2 - Independent Budget Office. Data include only city funds and actual commitments registered by the city comptroller. Although capital commitments reflect the value of registered contracts, they are not the same thing as expenditures, which measure payments by the city.

members, borough presidents and mayoral representatives has a strong tendency to favor high-visibility projects over everyday repair needs, since elected officials have an incentive to support projects they can get credit for before their term ends. Of the \$257 million for library capital projects funded by Mayor Bloomberg over the last five years, a clear majority was for just one project—NYPL’s high-profile plan to build a new circulating library at the Schwarzman building on 42nd Street.¹⁸ Council mem-

bers and borough presidents, too, are reluctant to use their limited resources on projects that aren’t likely to get much attention, even if it means dramatically improving the functionality of a building. In fiscal year 2014, despite having over \$300 million in unmet capital needs, the Brooklyn Public Library received capital funding from only four members of the Brooklyn delegation in City Council. In all, the library received just \$1.4 million from the borough president and \$7.5 million from the City Council that year.

*Commitment Rate for Capital Projects: FY2004–FY2013**

	PUBLIC LIBRARIES	CULTURAL AFFAIRS	CITYWIDE TOTAL
Commitment Plan	\$2.23B	\$6.07B	\$138.6B
Commitments	\$0.47B	\$1.95B	\$62.0B
Commitment Rate	21%	32%	45%

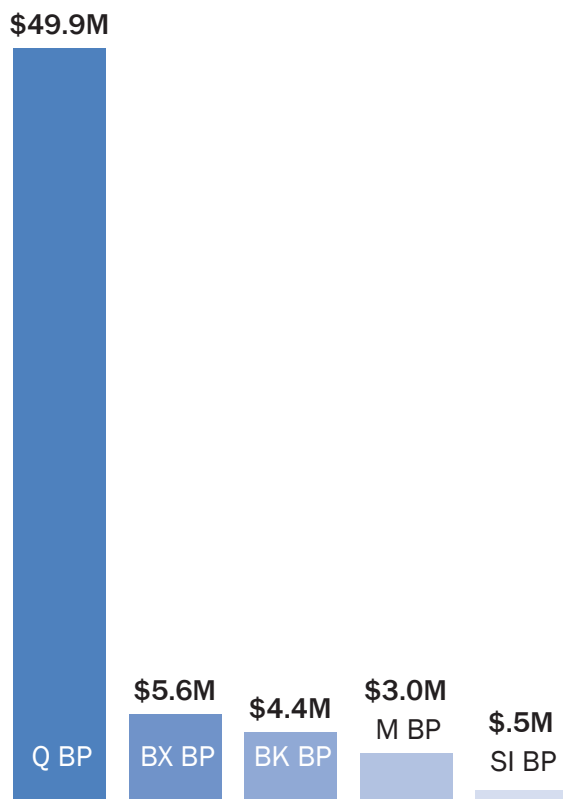
Source: Independent Budget Office. Data include non-city funds. The citywide total excludes capital funds for the Department of Education/School Construction Authority.

*The commitment rate is meant to show how quickly capital projects make it through the city’s approvals and contracting processes to become registered projects at the city comptroller.

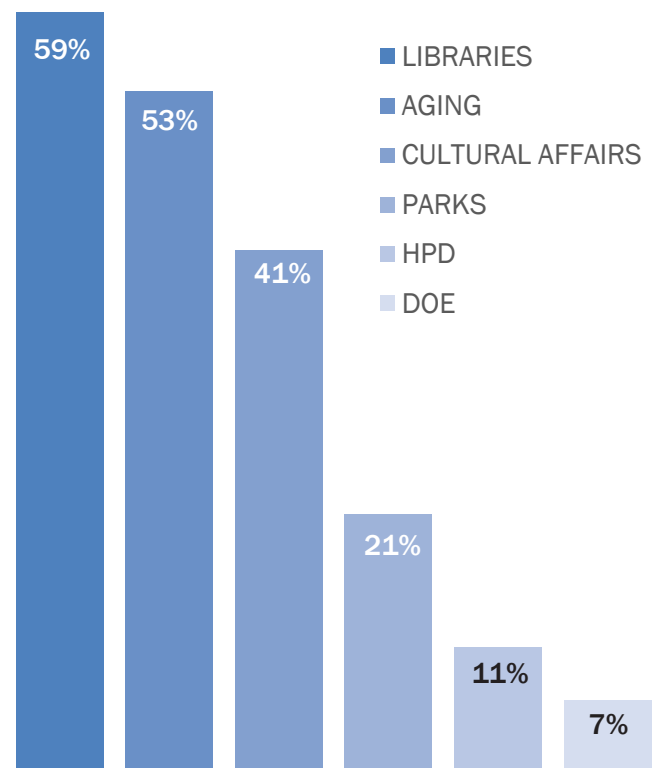
“Funding a new roof or a new boiler just doesn’t capture the imagination,” explains former BPL Chief Librarian Richard Reyes-Gavilan, now the executive director of the Washington D.C. Public Library.

Relatedly, with a relatively small amount of funds to divide up among various projects, council members generally can’t put up enough money to cover the whole cost of a capital project. This makes it less attractive to elected representatives who want their dollars used as quickly as possible, and it causes headaches for the libraries as they continue to shop the same project around, piecing together funds from multiple sources. The funding process alone can take years in some cases, and it often requires the libraries to chop their branch projects up into smaller, more manageable pieces.

3. Capital Appropriations to NYC Libraries by Borough Presidents, FY2010–FY2014



4. Percent of Capital Funds from City Council and Borough Presidents, FY2004–FY2013



You shouldn't be funding capital projects piecemeal. Doing it on a discretionary basis is not consistent with long-term planning. It's not well thought-out, and there's no way of ensuring that what some particular council members do is consistent with an overall plan.



For example, when the Washington Heights branch was renovated in 2011, NYPL spent several million dollars to do renovations on the first and second floors, but didn't have funding to do the third floor and custodial apartment, replace some windows, and renovate the exterior, all which would have cost an additional \$4.8 million. As it stands, the Washington Heights branch has been much improved, but still needs lots of work and hasn't come anywhere near reaching its full potential. This is extremely common. Since 2010, 79 percent of the branches receiving capital upgrades still have outstanding state of good repair needs, and 64 percent have \$1 million or more in needs.¹⁹

Doing everything in this piecemeal way makes it difficult to do long-term planning, since so much of the libraries' planning capacity is geared toward piecing together funds for projects and figuring out how they can be stretched to cover their needs. "You shouldn't be funding capital projects piecemeal," says Charles Brecher, consulting research director at the Citizens Budget Commission and a professor of public policy at NYU. "Doing it on a discretionary basis is not consistent with long-term planning," he says. "It's not well thought-out, and there's no way of ensuring that what some particular council members do is consistent with an overall plan."

Beyond funding, getting project appropriations approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to make sure they are capital eligible, scoped by the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) to arrive at a more exact cost and time estimate, and then certified to go out to bid can be an extremely time-consuming and arduous process in its own right. Because the vast majority of capital projects in the city budget are financed through long-term debt, OMB has to make sure each project meets the state finance law and the city comptrol-

ler's Directive 10 guidelines for capital eligibility. Among other things, projects have to be comprehensive rather than merely surface treatments, have a useful life of at least five years, and significantly improve the library's ability to serve patrons. To be considered a single project, they also have to be physically or functionally contiguous; building a teen center on the second floor and a ramp for wheelchairs at the entrance, for instance, will be certified as two projects and go out to bid separately.

Because so much interpretation is involved in determining what is "comprehensive" or "contiguous," the libraries are often asked to dramatically revise their proposals, which in some cases requires going back to elected officials for more money. When the Park Slope branch in Brooklyn was closed in 2009 so that contractors could install a new elevator and make other important changes for ADA compliance, the library raised funds for a modest interior renovation so that they could make most use of the time the branch was closed and modernize the layout and look of the interior. But though the estimated cost was \$350,000, OMB rejected the proposal as a surface treatment, requiring the library to go back and devise another more expensive and more intrusive renovation plan. In the end, the interior renovation cost \$1.8 million and by the time all the work was done—including the ADA work—the branch had been closed for three years.

The fact that most library capital projects go through the funding, approvals and contracting process separately, no matter how small or how similar they are to other projects going on at the same time, makes them some of the slowest and most expensive to complete in the city. Library projects move out of the city's commitment plan, which includes only fully funded and authorized projects, into the bidding and contracting process at a much slower rate than most other agencies, even the Department

SOURCE: Chart 3 - Office of Management and Budget, Fiscal Year 2010-2014 Adopted Capital Budgets. Chart 4 - Independent Budget Office. Data include only city funds and actual commitments registered by the city comptroller. DOE figures represent a pass-through from the city to School Construction Authority and not real-time capital commitments.

of Cultural Affairs, which helps oversee capital funding for independent cultural groups. On average, just 21 percent of library projects move out of the city's commitment plan every year to become a registered contract with the city comptroller, compared to 45 percent for all city agencies (excluding the School Construction Authority) and 32 percent for cultural groups.

After contracts are signed, even relatively small library projects can take several years and cost exorbitant amounts. "Getting the money appropriated, the design, getting the funds committed, then the construction—the process takes so long you have to forecast six to eight years down the road," says BPL Executive Vice President Brett Robinson.

The new Mariner's Harbor branch on Staten Island, for example, cost \$12.4 million and took four and a half years to design and build once it had been approved by OMB and scoped by DDC, though it is just a one-story, 10,000-square-foot building. The newly renovated Stapleton branch was closed for three years once construction had started and cost \$15 million for a one-story, 12,000-square-foot building. Brooklyn's new Kensington branch, which cost \$13 million for an 18,000-square-foot

building, was a relative bargain, but from design to completion the project took nearly 13 years.

According to NYPL, city-managed renovation projects cost, on average, \$616 per square foot (or \$435 per square foot in trade costs) and take nearly seven years from design to completion, while new construction costs \$1,262 per square foot and takes nearly seven and a half years to complete. The Queens and Brooklyn Public Libraries report similar numbers.²⁰

Along with the discretionary funding process, the cost and length of construction has been a major constraint on the amount of renovation work and new building the libraries can do. Over the last 20 years, New York's three library systems have managed to build or fully renovate just 54 branches, or 26 percent of the city's total. Just 15 new libraries have been developed in New York since 1994, and nearly half of those were in Queens. Since 1995, when it opened two new branches, the Brooklyn Public Library has managed to build just one new branch (Kensington) and fully renovate eight others. As we document in the next chapter, this stands in stark contrast with many other cities across the country.

Rising IT Costs, Constrained Budgets

Public libraries have long been important access points for information, and in a digital world serving that function well requires technology. According to a 2011 study by researchers at SUNY Albany, approximately 2.9 million residents in New York City don't have broadband Internet access at home.²¹ For many of these people, the neighborhood library is the only place they can go to check email, search for jobs, submit applications, file taxes, or any number of other everyday tasks that require computers and Internet access.

However, as technology becomes an increasingly important part of what libraries do, funding has not kept pace with the rising costs of additional computers and bandwidth. The libraries' operating budgets have actually decreased since 2008, and although desktop computers are eligible to receive capital funds, many other important technologies are not. These include laptops, tablets, cloud storage, broadband and, in many cases, even electrical distribution upgrades to increase the number of outlets for patrons on their laptops. Outside of desktop computers, most computing devices do not meet the five-year "useful life" criterion for capital-eligible items, and electrical upgrades often fall into the category of a "surface treatment," making them ineligible as well.

This combination of rising IT costs and low budgets have impaired the libraries' ability to meet the technology needs of their patrons. Nearly 70 percent of respondents in our survey indicated that existing computers, printers and Wi-Fi speeds were not sufficient to meet demand in their libraries. And in a test of broadband speeds at the Brooklyn Public Library earlier this year, library staff found that nearly all of their locations fell far short of national standards. The download speeds at the 46 locations tested ranged from 306 kilobits per second (kbps) to 2.8 megabits per second (mbps). By contrast, the FCC's 2014 Measuring Broadband America report found that average download speeds at homes across the country were approximately 21 mbps, or nearly eight times faster than the fastest libraries in Brooklyn.²²

NEW VISIONS FOR URBAN LIBRARIES

Public libraries in other major American cities have taken ambitious steps to modernize their buildings and services

WHEN FACED WITH DETERIORATING AND OUTMODED libraries, a number of other cities across the country have invested in ambitious modernization plans. By developing thoughtful, systemwide capital planning programs, they've been able to revitalize their aging libraries while improving services for their patrons.

In Chicago, library construction has been a key component of the city's larger neighborhood revitalization efforts. Library staff worked closely with the mayor's office to develop an ongoing capital program which has renovated or rebuilt 60 of the city's branch libraries since 1989.²³ By 2013, Chicago had rebuilt or renovated more than 75 percent of its library system, often replacing leased storefronts with modern, environmentally friendly buildings.

In 1998, Seattle issued the largest library bond in U.S. history in order to build a new central library downtown and build or renovate 26 branch facilities. Totalling \$197 million (\$287 million in 2014 dollars), the bond was supplemented by \$83 million (\$121 million in 2014 dollars) in foundation grants and individual donations.²⁴ With that, the Seattle Public Library was able to build an impressive 11-story, 363,000-square-foot central library,

which, along with the branch library expansions, effectively doubled its square feet across the city. Similarly, Los Angeles replaced over 90 percent of its library infrastructure during its 1989 and 1998 capital programs, building or renovating 64 branches in a 15-year period. In L.A.'s most recent strategic plan, they propose an additional 19 projects, including two renovations and 17 new buildings in order to keep pace with projected demand.²⁵

In 2000, the San Francisco Public Library launched the largest capital improvement program in its history, in order to replace older storefront branches or create entirely new locations. The 24-building campaign, renovating 16 existing facilities and building eight new ones, touched the lion's share of the system's 27 total locations.²⁶

The Columbus Metropolitan Library in Ohio, a consistently top-performing library system, is in the early stages of its 2020 Vision Plan, with a goal of more than doubling—and possibly tripling—the system's square footage in just 20 years. Responding to a need for more activity space, they are designing buildings that provide ample



We would buy old motels and liquor stores in order to transform these communities with libraries at their center.

Two campaigns in Chicago resulted in

**60 NEW
OR RENOVATED
BRANCHES**

Backed by a \$200M bond, the Seattle Public Library doubled their original goal and raised

**30% IN ADDITIONAL
PRIVATE FUNDING**

Voters in Columbus approved a tax increase to fund library capital improvements by a

2 TO 1 MARGIN

seating, collaborative workspaces, and flexible layouts to meet a variety of user needs.²⁷

In every one of these cases, libraries and city officials didn't just raise funds to cover existing state of good repair needs, they articulated comprehensive plans based on evaluations of their buildings, user and community needs, and demographic changes. The Columbus Metropolitan Library's 2020 Vision Plan, for instance, used customer mapping data to help define service areas and locate both overstretched branches and underserved neighborhoods. The library evaluated use patterns across its branches as well as demographic trends throughout the region. And, with the help of a team of architects and library consultants, they found that all but one of their existing facilities was undersized and lacked sufficient seating and meeting spaces to meet current and future patron needs.

In Chicago, proactive capital planning plus support from city and state government led the library to work with the city planning department to find new locations for dozens of outmoded and underperforming storefront branches. The new locations needed to be in places where they could attract patrons and bolster larger community development efforts. "We would buy old motels and liquor stores in order to transform these communities with libraries at their center," explains former library commissioner Mary Dempsey. In West Englewood, the library worked with the department of city planning to help stabilize a neighborhood that had suffered from decades of disinvestment, putting the library next to a planned daycare center and social service nonprofit as well as parks and schools. "We got in our cars and drove around to see what kind of development would have the biggest effect," says Dempsey.

While some cities like Chicago can issue bonds unilaterally, others must turn to voters. Columbus, Los Angeles, and Seattle all passed ballot initiatives by large margins for their library capital campaigns.²⁸ Seattle's "Libraries for All" initiative passed with 70 percent of the vote, and when the Columbus library sought to increase the property tax levy to help make up for declining state support and fund the debt service for their new capital campaign, voters approved it by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, despite a weak local economy. With the increased property tax revenue, the library chose to sell tax-exempt library notes in 2012 to fund part of the 2020 Vision Plan. The library received so much interest that the notes sold out within three hours.²⁹ Of the library's ability to issue notes to fund capital projects, Columbus Metropolitan Library

Ambitious Library Capital Campaigns in Other Cities

CITY	YEAR	CAMPAIGN COST*	LIBRARIES BUILT OR RENOVATED	% OF BRANCHES AFFECTED
Seattle, WA	1998	\$408.6	27	100%
Los Angeles, CA	1989 1998	\$207.6 \$330.9	64	90%
San Francisco	2000	\$146.6	24	88%
Chicago, IL	1996-2000	\$152.3	60	75%
Cuyahoga County, OH	2010	\$120.2	18	66%
Columbus, OH**	2010	\$131.2	10	48%

*Dollar amounts are listed in millions and reflect inflation adjusted 2014 dollars.

**Phase 1 of Columbus Metropolitan Library's 2020 Vision Plan.

CEO Patrick Losinski says, “We have a level of independence that makes us more nimble, much less subject to the whims of a certain political wind.”

In Seattle, Columbus, Indianapolis, and Washington D.C., among other cities, community engagement has played a critical role in documenting patron needs and winning public support for capital campaigns. To create the 2020 Vision Plan, the Columbus Metropolitan Library held focus groups and community meetings to help document shortcomings in existing facilities. Like in New York, they found a lack of electrical outlets, group activity spaces and meeting rooms were at the top of the list.

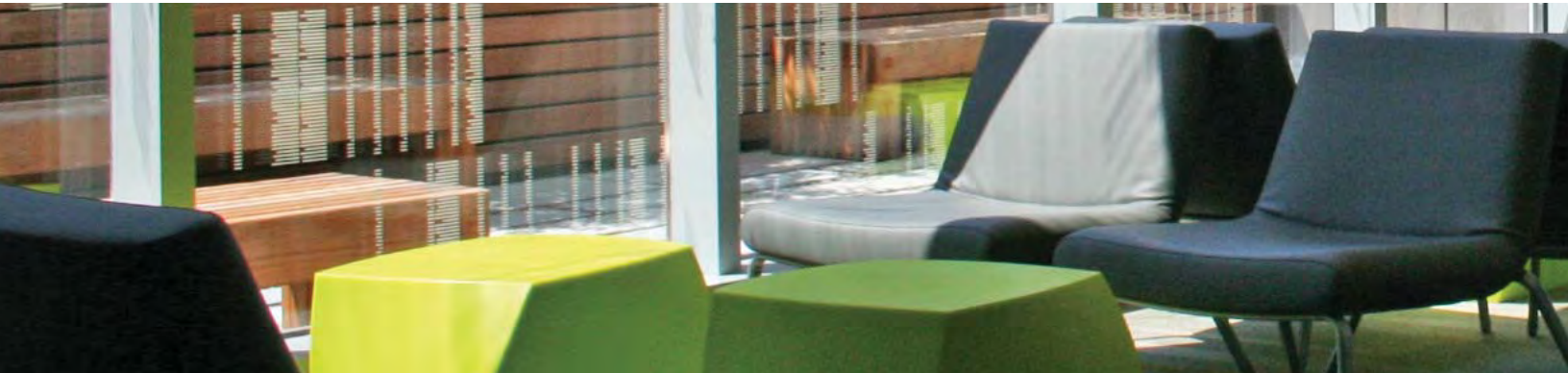
In Seattle’s Libraries for All campaign, library staff held over 100 community meetings over the course of just four months in order to listen and document ideas for new and renovated libraries. Through this process, residents started to develop a sense of ownership over the process that was critical in getting the bond initiative passed. But, according to Deborah Jacobs, the head librarian during the campaign, it also paved the way for deeper community relationships after the libraries opened (or reopened) in their communities. The meetings resulted in unique buildings that reflect the individual needs of their communities, she says, and they helped

library staff build stronger relationships with neighborhood leaders and groups.

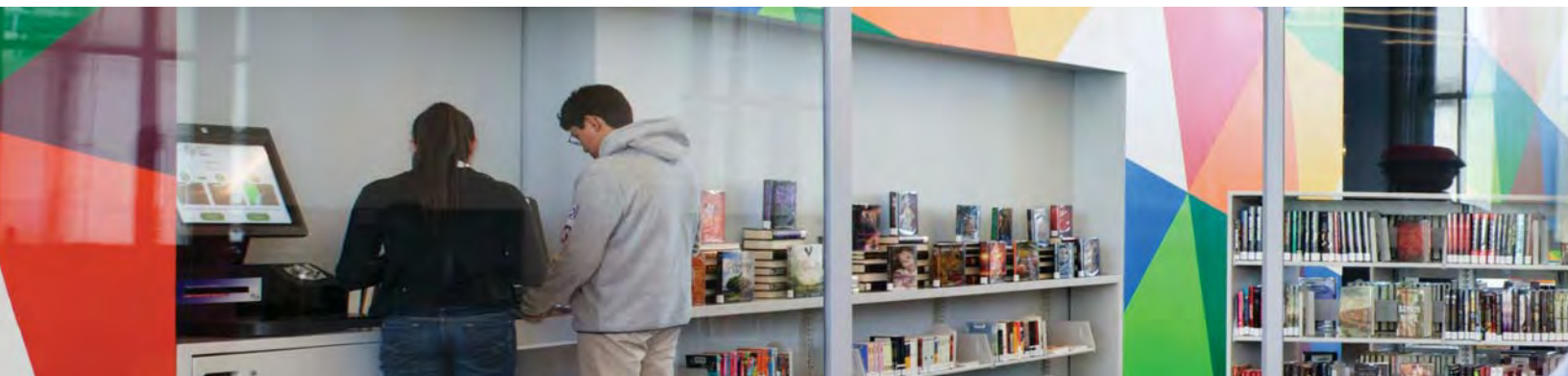
Through these community meetings and the resulting capital investments, Libraries for All had a tremendous impact on library performance. At the completion of the building program in 2008, circulation across Seattle’s 27 branches had risen 94 percent and attendance at public programs 62 percent.³⁰

PART II

BLUEPRINT FO



Glen Oaks, Queens. Marble Fairbanks. Photo: Queens Library



Hamilton Grange, Manhattan. Rice+Lipka Architects. Photo: Michael Moran



Stone Avenue, Brooklyn. SeeChangeNYC and Biber Architects. Photo: © Albert Verceka/Esto

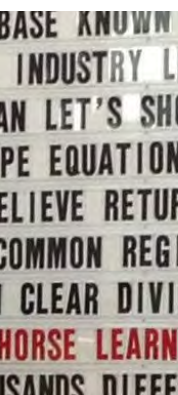
FOR THE FUTURE

NEW YORK CITY NEEDS A BOLD NEW VISION FOR HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF ITS BRANCH LIBRARIES.

With roots in nearly every community across the five boroughs, the libraries are uniquely positioned to help the city address several economic, demographic and social challenges that will impact New York in the decades ahead—from the rapid aging of the city’s population (libraries are a go-to resource for seniors) and the continued growth in the number of foreign-born (libraries are the most trusted institution for immigrants) to the rise of the freelance economy (libraries are the original coworking spaces) and troubling increase in the number of disconnected youth (libraries are a safe haven for many teens and young adults).

But the city has not thought strategically about these assets in decades. Although libraries have stepped in to fill community needs in a variety of ways, the vast majority of the city’s branch libraries are struggling to meet the demands of their communities. As we detail in this report, the average branch library in New York is 61 years old and 59 branches have at least \$5 million in state of good repair needs. In addition, too many branches are not well-configured for how New Yorkers are using libraries today. Designed around their book collections, many don’t have enough space to accommodate the growing demand for literacy and after-school programs, computers and quiet spaces to work.

It’s time for Mayor de Blasio and the City Council to work with the three public library systems and develop a comprehensive vision for bringing these incredible assets into the 21st century. In the following blueprint, we detail more than 20 steps that the city and libraries can take to make the most use of these important public facilities, including how to make them responsive to the needs of today’s residents and how to put them on a more sustainable path for the future. The recommendations fall into three broad categories: Funding and Management; Collaboration and Community Engagement; and Design and Development.



FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT

1. Create and finance a citywide capital plan to bring New York City libraries into the 21st century

New York City’s community libraries have not been a priority in decades. The piecemeal approach the city has taken to their repair has resulted in crippling needs and a widespread lack of modern amenities. The vast majority of library buildings were designed around a very different, outmoded model of library service and struggle to provide spaces for people to study and get on the computer, much less take part in workshops.

In partnership with the libraries, the de Blasio administration should create a ten-year capital plan to address the \$1.1 billion in physical plant needs at the city’s libraries. Although \$1.1 billion sounds like a lot, it would represent only 1.3 percent of the city’s ten-year capital budget, given the spending levels over the last decade. And just as the Bloomberg administration doubled spending on cultural facilities over the last ten years—increasing total capital spending to \$2.1 billion in that time—the de Blasio administration should prioritize these increasingly critical neighborhood resources. A \$1.1 billion commitment to the libraries would represent just over double the funding the libraries have received in the last ten years. Making a firm financial commitment and working with the libraries to create a planning framework would also open the door to increased philanthropic dollars, as it did in Seattle’s Libraries for All campaign in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Backed by a \$196 million bond, Libraries for All doubled their private funding campaign goal, ultimately raising \$83 million—or nearly 30 percent in additional support—from private sources.

When the city submits a new ten-year capital plan next January, libraries should figure prominently. As the rest of this blueprint makes clear, creating a long-term plan and vision for New York City’s libraries would give the city an opportunity to incorporate these increasingly

valuable assets into its other policy priorities, particularly with respect to affordable housing and community development. And it would give the libraries an opportunity to realize much-needed efficiencies in their operations as well as in their building layouts and locations.

2. Create a “Director of Libraries” inside City Hall

By creating a new position in City Hall for a Director of Libraries, the city could strengthen these institutions’ status as quasi-public agencies. Because all three systems are independent nonprofits and yet depend so heavily on city funds for the majority of their expense and capital budgets, and because the vast majority of branch buildings are owned by the city, it makes sense to appoint someone who can both exercise oversight over the libraries’ management of city assets and serve as a knowledgeable voice on the city’s side during budget negotiations.

With respect to capital investments, in particular, a Director of Libraries could provide a knowledgeable perspective on what increased investments could do for library services across the city, how they could support other city goals, and how they might be best structured to create a long-term capital plan consisting of a pipeline of priority projects. A library liaison in City Hall could also help pave the way for partnerships between the libraries and other city agencies.

At the same time, this person and his or her team could encourage more cooperation across the three library systems by urging them to merge their collection management operations and invest in shared performance measures and asset management systems to aid in planning. And he or she could target other efficiencies by working with the libraries, OMB and DDC to package capital investments into single contracts, create clearer design standards for new and renovated branch libraries,

and pave the way for “pass-through” contracts for projects that draw on private donations and grants. According to Deputy DDC Commissioner David Resnick, project management support at the Department of Cultural Affairs has had a positive effect on on-time completion rates. “We have an intermediary agency on the cultural side that doesn’t really exist for libraries,” he noted in a recent City Council hearing.

3. Give the libraries a dedicated capital allocation for repair and expansion projects

Like other city agencies, the libraries shouldn’t have to depend on the city’s discretionary funding process to finance critical infrastructure upgrades. City Council members, in particular, rarely have enough money to cover these expenses in full, and most don’t want to use their limited funds on invisible state of good repair (SOGR) needs like new boilers, roofs, and HVACs. Because rais-

Making a firm financial commitment and working with the libraries to create a planning framework would also open the door to increased philanthropic dollars, as it did in Seattle’s Libraries for All campaign.



The \$10.6 million Ballard Branch, which opened in May 2005, was the 15th project completed under Seattle’s “Libraries for All” campaign. Photo: julesantonio / CC BY

ing funds through this process can take so long, needed repairs are often left to fester until an emergency makes them impossible to ignore.

As an alternative, the de Blasio administration should reserve enough capital funds every year for the libraries to create a pipeline of priority projects based on an assessment of their physical plant conditions rather than the success of their fundraising efforts. This is something past administrations have done for most other city agencies, while requiring the libraries to raise their funds project by project and location by location. Guaranteeing a pool of funding for critical infrastructure improvements would allow the libraries to be more proactive in their approach to building needs, investing in repairs long before they become emergencies. And it would help close the stark geographic disparities in funding resulting from the discretionary process.

Moreover, a guaranteed pool of SOGR funds would enable the libraries to make most use of the discretionary dollars they raise from individual City Council members and borough presidents. Instead of using those funds for critical but invisible building upgrades, they could use them for interior renovations and other strategic modernizations, including new computer labs, community rooms, teen centers and the like. Once a steady pipeline of administration-funded projects is underway, these kinds of interior renovations could be added in as enhancements to make most use of the time branches are closed to the public. If the libraries have a roof replacement job scheduled at the end of the following year, for example, they could try to raise additional funds for a new teen center as well. Being able to plan and coordinate projects in this way would be an enormous relief for the city's libraries.

4. Package similar capital projects into a single contract and bid

After funding is secured, getting individual capital projects into the city's Commitment Plan and then from the Commitment Plan to a Certificate to Proceed, whereupon an RFP is issued and ultimately a contract signed, tends to be a time-consuming and complicated process for all city agencies, but none more so than the libraries. As shown on page 29, library projects take much longer on average to complete the city's approvals process before being contracted out for work. Over the last ten years, the average annual commitment rate for library projects in the city's Commitment Plan—which measures how many projects authorized in the plan turn into real-world contracts registered by the Comptroller—was just

21 percent, compared to 45 percent for all city projects and 32 percent for DCA-funded projects.

Doing as many other city agencies do and packaging multiple projects into just one contract and bid could dramatically reduce the time it takes to complete this process. For example, 76 branches across the city are in need of security system upgrades, the combined cost of which is an estimated \$10.4 million. Rather than processing 76 different security system requests and contracting them out individually, these jobs should be packaged together and contracted out as one large project (or perhaps two or three projects, depending on the circumstances—but not 76). The city could do this for HVAC repairs, roof repairs, fire alarm replacements, or any number of other common building upgrades. The School Construction Authority likes to combine its playground renovations into a single contract, for instance, while the Department of Environmental Protection does the same for sewer repairs.³¹

Grouping projects in this way would save each individual upgrade from having to go through the city's lengthy certification and contracting process separately. It might also attract a larger group of qualified contractors and, in certain cases, reduce costs through bulk purchases and other economies of scale.

5. Pool discretionary allocations to form a Library Innovation Fund for each borough

Library capital projects are time-consuming in part because the libraries have to shop around projects to individual elected officials and piece together funds over several years. For even relatively simple projects like roof replacements or interior renovations, the libraries have to lobby borough presidents, council members, the council speaker and the mayor, putting together partial funds until the project is fully covered and can start the approvals process with the city. To help expedite this process, the libraries should work with the borough presidents and borough delegations in the City Council to create a pool of capital funds for each borough. As discussed in a recent report on the Department of Parks and Recreation, this will enable the libraries to create a more predictable pipeline of fully-funded projects while making these projects a more attractive investment for individual elected officials.³²

As a part of the funding pool—perhaps called the “Library Innovation Fund”—individual projects will still be shopped around to individual elected officials. But instead of contributing directly to a given project in their district, officials will pay into the fund over several years

while receiving a guarantee that their project will be fully funded in a given year. For example, a City Council member who wants to fund a \$2 million teen center in his or her district would be asked to contribute \$750,000 to the fund over three years with a guarantee that the project will be fully funded in the second year. Another council member who wants to fund a \$500,000 computer lab in his or her district could be asked to contribute \$125,000 over four years with a guarantee that the project will be fully funded in the third year. And so on. Although seed funding might be necessary to get this arrangement off the ground, as long as the building fund reached a minimum target every year, a stable pipeline of projects could be planned in advance and individual elected officials could spread out their investments with more certainty about when the project is going to start the approvals and contracting process.

Now that the City Council has created a formula for member items, council members will have a clearer sense of how much money they will receive each year during their term, and with the blessing of the council speaker, members can have faith that the funds' guarantees will be honored.³³

6. Reduce construction costs and delays for new and renovated libraries

When the libraries' capital needs are so great and funding is limited, it is imperative that city officials take steps to reduce sky-high construction costs and delays.

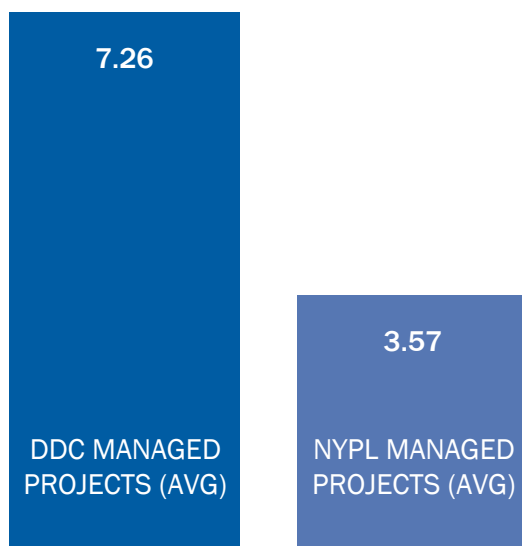
According to data collected by NYPL, city-managed construction projects regularly cost much more and take much longer to complete than projects they manage themselves. For example, when managed by the city, the average cost of major renovations is \$616 per square foot and the duration 80 months (or nearly seven years), compared to \$412 per square foot and just under two years when managed by NYPL.

Similarly, ground up construction projects cost \$1,262 per square foot and take seven years and four months to complete when managed by the city, compared to just \$642 per square foot and three and a half years when managed by NYPL.

Although these averages encompass just a handful of projects completed since 2007—five city-managed renovations, for example, and four NYPL-managed renovations—the Brooklyn and Queens public libraries report similar discrepancies.³⁴ In all three systems, major renovations have resulted in closed libraries and dramatically reduced services for years at a time.

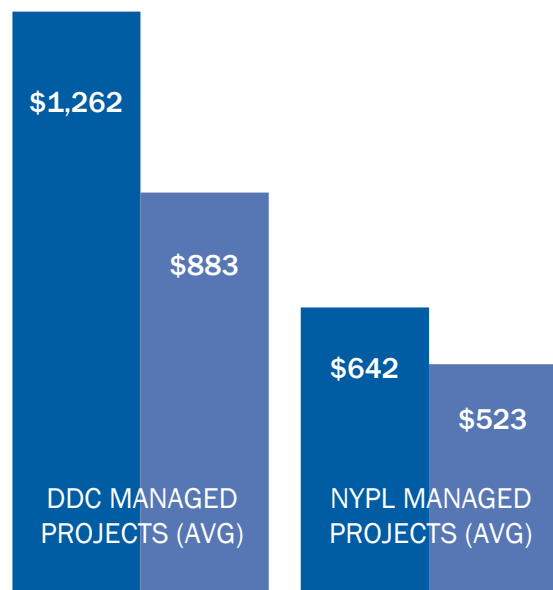
City legislators, budget officials and construction managers should identify ways to speed up projects and reduce costs. And when appropriate, they should allow the libraries to manage more of their own renovation projects, particularly when they have a proven track record doing similarly-sized work. In the early 2000s, construction managers at the Department of Cultural Affairs

1. Average Duration of New Construction Projects (years)



2. Average Cost of New Construction

- TOTAL COST/SQFT
- CONSTRUCTION COST/SQFT



(DCLA) worked with key staff members at the Department of Design and Construction (DDC), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Mayor's Office of Contracts (MOCS) to standardize and expedite the approvals process for various kinds of projects and independent organizations. DCLA staff worked with client organizations to prepare the necessary construction documents and organize presentations so that staff members at DDC, OMB and MOCS could become better acquainted with the project and raise concerns before issuing (or declining to issue) a Certificate to Proceed. According to several agency insiders we interviewed for this report, this process not only expedited projects considerably—it led to more “pass-through” contracts and reduced frustration on both sides.

Though more needs to be done to bring down costs, a similar program for the libraries would be a good first step toward addressing crippling delays and high construction costs.

7. Refine and standardize the city's interpretations of capital eligibility requirements for libraries

As all capital projects funded by the city are blended together and financed by long-term debt, it is important to make sure that every project meets state law and generally accepted accounting principles governing the types of things that can be financed in this way. Generally, they have to be fixed or long-lived assets, and the city's capital investments have to go toward acquiring or functionally improving these assets. Although the city comptroller has articulated a set of guidelines to help determine the capital eligibility of specific proposals, OMB has extensive latitude in its interpretation of those guidelines.³⁵ What counts as a functionally significant or “comprehensive” improvement, for example, as opposed to a “surface” improvement, or even what counts as a single project as opposed to separate projects at the same site, are decisions made by members in the OMB's task force on Infrastructure, Culturals and Libraries and the bond counsel's office. And oftentimes these decisions are made in the absence of any clearly stated standards or precedents and without consideration of any long-term planning on the part of the libraries.

Over the last few years, for instance, OMB has deemed proposals to turn the exterior grounds of libraries into public parks as ineligible for capital funds, even though public parks and playgrounds regularly qualify. Second, it has rejected interior renovations costing

hundreds of thousands of dollars that would have modernized the layouts and changed the function of library spaces as mere surface treatments. Third, it has turned down plans to invest in new buildings that could be expanded in the future to accommodate increases in users and changing neighborhood demographics because the libraries' current operating budget wouldn't be enough to cover future service expansions. The first one of these decisions is arguably inconsistent with broader capital eligibility criteria; the second is hard to assess in the absence of a clearer set of rules distinguishing surface treatments from comprehensive improvements; and the third is simply shortsighted.

In conjunction with the libraries, city officials should develop a clearer set of capital eligibility standards that relies less on individual interpretations and more on an assessment of needs that includes use patterns, service area information, and a long-term plan governing both operations and capital investments. In the absence of any clearly defined standards or any information detailing library service areas, customer needs and demographic changes, OMB is forced to make critical capital investment decisions in a vacuum of information, and the libraries are oftentimes left to labor on proposals whose eligibility they are unsure about. This could begin to change with the creation of a long-term capital investment plan and if the city appoints a Director of Libraries at City Hall, but it will also require budget officials inside OMB to make reforms in how staff members interpret capital eligibility requirements for libraries.

8. Revisit capital eligibility rules and expense funding formulas to cover rising information technology costs

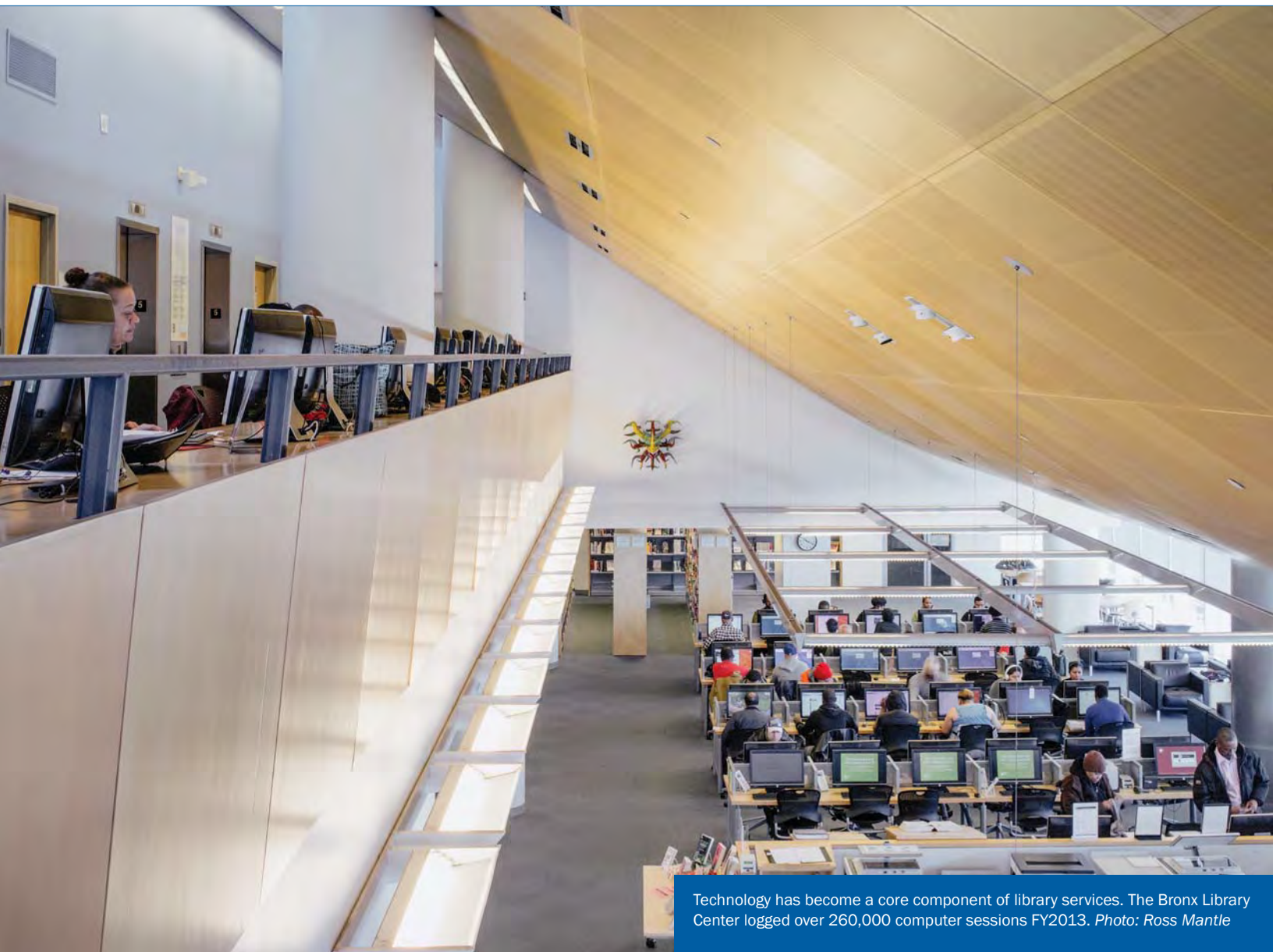
As the demand for library services has increased over the last decade, information technology has entered the picture as a core component of those services. People come to libraries to access the Internet and use software or databases they don't have access to at home. And increasingly they go to the libraries' websites to check out e-books and MP3s, or to have physical books delivered to their local branch through the online holds system.

However, as demand for these services has increased, IT costs have skyrocketed. Fewer and fewer electronic devices qualify for capital funds, and the extra costs for these and other services are putting more pressure on the libraries' already stretched operating budgets. City officials should take steps to make sure the libraries have the financial resources to continue to of-

fer this critical public service. For instance, officials could explore ways to loosen certain capital eligibility restrictions that currently prohibit laptops, tablets, e-readers and other mobile devices from being purchased through the city's capital fund. To be capital-eligible, an asset has to have a useful life of at least five years, making many IT components and devices—even desktop computers—risky candidates for capital funds, but since books, CDs and DVDs are an eligible expense during a library's "initial outfitting," regardless of whether they are "long-lived" assets, mobile devices should be considered eligible as well. After all, laptops and tablets are now checked out for use at the library just like books. When they are a part of a larger IT system using onsite servers, e-readers should also be considered capital-eligible whenever the system is eligible. In the past, RFID chips in library books have been considered capital-eligible, since they are an integral part of some self-checkout systems.

But, most important of all, city officials need to make sure the libraries' operating budgets are able to keep pace with their patrons' IT demands. Increasing funds on the operating side will allow the libraries to keep pace with innovations and allow them to purchase devices that don't meet the five-year requirement for capital eligible assets. If policymakers want assurance that the extra funds are going toward the purchase of new technologies, an IT carve-out could be considered. The federal E-rate program, which was created in 1997 to help fund technology purchases for schools and libraries across the country, could help fill the gap if funding were increased and more evenly distributed between schools and libraries, but it is not likely to be enough to avoid an increase in city spending as well.³⁶

Either way, given how important access to technology is in our increasingly information-driven economy, skimping on this service is not an option for libraries.



Technology has become a core component of library services. The Bronx Library Center logged over 260,000 computer sessions FY2013. Photo: Ross Mantle

9. Continue to invest in floating collections and consolidate collection management operations

Though e-book lending tends to get a lot more attention in the media, being able to browse an online catalogue and have nearly any book delivered to the nearest branch has made perhaps an even bigger mark on library services over the last few years. The so-called “online holds” system has made it possible for patrons to search through millions of books using an increasingly sophisticated set of online tools rather than what happens to be on the shelves at any one branch, and it gives the libraries the opportunity to be more strategic in the management of their collection, diversifying their purchases and allowing the books to float between branches as they are ordered and returned to new locations.

Rather than purchasing and housing a set collection for each branch, NYPL and BPL have both moved to this “floating collection” model and concentrated their collection management activities in the same facility in Long Island City. And, as with other prominent public library systems, these changes have started to achieve a number of important efficiencies: First, as all materials moving through the online holds system now go through an automated sorting machine, the error rate for deliveries has dropped from 12 percent to 1 percent, meaning that patrons are much more likely to receive their requests on time (typically within two or three days). Second, because nearly all book purchasing, sorting, and labeling happens in one place, using dedicated staff, fewer employees have to be used for this work and branch librarians can focus more on front-facing services like answering patron questions and administering public programs.

Last but not least, the tens of thousands of square feet that were formally dedicated to collection management activities in the branches can now be turned into programmable space for patrons. As more and more branches get renovated and modernized over the next ten years, this could have a transformative effect on patron experiences, giving them more room to work, study or participate in classes and other events.

However, because the floating collection model, called Book Ops, is still in its first year, some important kinks still need to be worked out. As books travel from branch to branch, for example, some branches are receiving more books than their shelves can handle while others are having a hard time keeping their shelves filled. The online catalog still needs to be improved to make it

possible for speakers of other languages (particularly Chinese and other languages that don't use the Latin alphabet) to browse and order titles, and more residents need to be made aware of all the materials—millions system-wide—that are available to them at the click of a button. But these issues can all be solved. As new strategies get implemented to deal with the volume imbalance among book-return locations, and as more and more people start to use the online holds system, the value of a floating collection will only grow, both in terms of costs for the libraries and convenience for patrons. Relatedly, Book Ops will make it easier in the future to develop branch libraries with very small or no on-site book collections without reducing local patrons' access to physical books and DVDs. This would be a big advantage for many retail spaces and Lindsay boxes that would otherwise struggle to accommodate lots of shelving while still offering public programs and access to computers.

So far the Queens Library has opted to stay out of the arrangement, even though the Long Island City Book Ops facility can easily handle another system. The Queens Library has only recently begun to centralize its collection management operation. Until recently, each branch purchased and processed its own collection of books and DVDs, and though nearly all of the processing now happens out of a central location, branches still receive funds to make purchases for their own community. Book Ops also allows local branch staff to make purchasing requests and recall books for their own branch, but by and large the materials are allowed to travel where they're most wanted so that local library personnel can spend more time working face to face with patrons.

Queens could centralize more of its collection management activities and adopt a floating model while remaining in the current distribution location. But joining Book Ops could achieve even more efficiencies in terms of distribution equipment and personnel, and it would pave the way for a citywide return and holds system that would allow patrons to order books from all three library collections and have them delivered to their closest branch.

Given the considerable advantages of floating collections and the relatively space-intensive use of onsite sorting machines at Queens library branches—many of which are badly stretched for space as it is—the library should revisit the issue and strongly consider adopting a floating collection model and moving their collection management operation to the Book Ops facility.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

10. Tie library investments to larger community development initiatives

Between 1989 and 2011, spanning Mayor Richard M. Daley’s five terms in office, the city of Chicago used libraries as a key component in its neighborhood revitalization efforts, building 55 new or fully renovated branches and locating them in strategic areas to bolster economic and community development. Library projects played critical roles in the redevelopment of the near North Side, for instance, where a public housing complex (the Cabrini Green Homes) was undergoing major redevelopment, and in West Englewood on the far south side, where officials wanted to encourage new development after decades of decline and disinvestment. According to former Chicago Library Commissioner Mary Dempsey, the library partnered with other city agencies to coordinate efforts and locate the most appropriate sites, oftentimes eliminating blight in the process of acquiring land for new libraries.

This kind of cross-agency collaboration rarely happens in New York. Even where libraries have been built or rebuilt over the last decade, little effort has been made to tie these investments to a larger vision for the neighborhood. In 2007, the Queens Library opened a new branch in western Queens, not far from the Ravenswood and Queensbridge Houses and a quickly developing wa-

terfront—but the location on 21st Street was in a manufacturing district, surrounded by auto body shops and gas stations, and the resulting anti-pedestrian environment has made it difficult to attract patrons.³⁷ A coordinated development approach would have paired a major library investment with a proposal to rezone 21st Street, an idea with merit all its own, or else another site in a more pedestrian friendly part of the neighborhood might have been found. If the Near North library in Chicago is any indication, a new library at the intersection of public housing and new market rate developments would have been—and, in this case, may still be—a powerful way to bridge social divides and build a sense of community and common ownership of the neighborhood.³⁸

Now that community development and neighborhood revitalization are top priorities in Mayor de Blasio’s housing plan, the city’s Department of City Planning, Economic Development Corporation and Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) should incorporate libraries in their affordable housing strategy, as should any plan to redevelop NYCHA facilities.³⁹ In newly developed areas of the city, new libraries should be considered. And where increased residential density is being encouraged near existing branches, renovations and expansions should be on the table.

New libraries at the intersection of public housing and new market rate developments would be a powerful way to bridge social divides and build a sense of community.

Like the Long Island City branch in western Queens, several libraries across the city are stranded by empty lots and anti-pedestrian streetscapes and would actually benefit from residential development on nearby properties. The 125th Street branch on the far east side of Harlem, for instance, is a beautiful three-story library built in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, but it is surrounded by vacant lots and auto body shops and has struggled to attract patrons as a result. Three empty parcels across the street on 125th and 126th Streets (totaling 122,000 square feet) are city-owned. If they become sites for new housing developments, the 125th Street branch, which has a closed-off third floor and \$12 million in capital needs, should undergo a full renovation to better serve the neighborhood. Other branches located near government or Local Development Corporation-owned parking lots or other vacant property include the Queens Central Library (located in Downtown Jamaica, Queens), Seaside (Rockaway Beach, Queens), Inwood (Upper Manhattan), Woodstock (160th Street, Bronx), St. George (Central Avenue, Staten Island), Marcy (DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn) and Coney Island (Mermaid Avenue, Brooklyn).

11. Create opportunities for community involvement in the design of new libraries

Engaging neighborhood residents and leaders in a structured and transparent way during the creation of new branches and spaces can serve two interrelated goals: giving library administrators and designers an opportunity to assess real needs in the community, thereby avoiding unnecessary service duplications; and paving the way for the kind of organizational partnerships that can lead to important new programs and services once the new building or space reopens.

“No matter what you do, you really need to reach out and understand what your community needs,” says Susan Hildreth, director of the Institute for Museum and Library Services and former chief librarian of the San Francisco Public Library. “You’re not retooling these buildings in a vacuum. Reaching out to communities and understanding what their top priorities are—it’s not the same in every neighborhood. And it should impact the look and feel of the new building or renovation.”

In cities across the country, local libraries and museums have initiated new phases in their community programming and positioned themselves more explicitly as partners in community development through the process of building new facilities.⁴⁰ But convening community meetings to get feedback on existing plans is not normal-

ly enough to foster lasting partnerships and a sense of community ownership over the final product.

A more effective community engagement process should start by building strong relationships with community leaders and include focused public meetings in which broader community concerns can be articulated and documented. The meetings should happen before plans are fully developed, and the libraries should use them to inform future services in addition to capital improvements. A focused community engagement process can help identify future programming partners as well as possible gaps in neighborhood resources. It might uncover an arts group that could be a programming partner in a new after-school space for teenagers, for example, or a newly refurbished NYCHA community center that is already attracting local teenagers. In the latter case, investing in a teen room may be a counterproductive use of precious space, and the library should consider specializing in something else the neighborhood lacks.

According to David Lankes at Syracuse University’s School of Information Studies, to get the most out of this process libraries should partner with community-based organizations to set up focus groups and public meetings, since, as he says, “The majority of librarians are taught to deal with collections, not to have these conversations.” But the libraries themselves should also invest in a structured process that can be implemented in every neighborhood receiving significant space upgrades. In addition to documenting public input, the libraries will need to carefully define where and how the community is going to influence the design process and manage expectations over the final product. Participants should not be making detailed design decisions but provide input on community needs and concerns so that the libraries and designers are informed.

12. Invest in spaces that facilitate and even encourage outside partnerships

Public libraries have long been important civic spaces for social mixing and sharing, but their importance in this sphere has undoubtedly grown as more and more people of all ages seek to pick up new skills for their own pleasure and economic advancement. In this regard, developing spaces that facilitate and even promote outside partnerships will be critical if the libraries are going to avoid overburdening their own human capital capacity.⁴¹

The libraries have already started to invest in different kinds of spaces and partnership models. For example, NYPL recently partnered with Coursera, an online ed-

educational provider based at Stanford, to develop several branch-based “learning hubs” to supplement the company’s virtual courses. And BPL recently opened a media lab and recording studio—the Shelby White and Leon Levy InfoCommons—that draws on outside organizations and experts to offer both basic and advanced classes in digital media. But these kinds of arrangements are still relatively rare. Although most library buildings in New York have community rooms for workshops and classes, many of them are underutilized due to their size, design and location within the building (despite the fact that other community rooms are oversubscribed). And in some cases, even when the room is well-used, it fails to register as a resource for outside groups rather than as a place for library-led programming.

In Madison, Wisconsin, the library co-developed a room and program that successfully advertises itself as a space for ongoing community involvement and sharing. Like InfoCommons, the so-called “Bubbler” draws on the skills and expertise of the broader creative community to put on workshops and demonstrations for anybody interested in learning or perfecting a new skill, but it is not limited to digital media and does not require specialized equipment or software. Though anchored in a room in the Central library, Bubbler events—including everything from beer brewing and cheese-making to creative writing and video game design—take place in all nine of the city’s library branches.⁴² This could be a model for New York. In new or renovated facilities, not all community rooms need to have the same resources—some could have specialized equipment like a recording studio or commercial kitchen, while others are simply inviting spaces with good seating and storage—but like the “Bubbler” they should all communicate their status as a community resource open to outside organizations, whether nonprofit social service and educational providers, artist collectives or small businesses.

Where community rooms are located inside the library, how they are branded or packaged to patrons, and what the rules and process are for reserving and using these spaces makes a huge difference to how they are perceived and used by third parties. With respect to the community room rules, the libraries should consider allowing some outside organizations to charge reasonable fees for their classes, as long as they abide by stated ethical standards and pay a fee for use of the facilities.⁴³

In some new buildings, the city and libraries should also consider developing separate facilities for more permanent partners. A number of New York City branches



are already outfitted with Workforce1 job placement centers run through the City’s Department of Small Business Services, and they will soon be home to several walk-in offices for the de Blasio administration’s Municipal ID program. Future spaces could be made available for Financial Empowerment Centers, Business Solution Centers or third-party organizations like Single Stop USA, which helps people through the application process for a wide variety of social safety net and educational programs.⁴⁴ In New York, these services are typically squeezed into already existing spaces inside the library, but newer buildings offer different, more deliberate possibilities. In Seattle, where the library partnered with another city agency to put “mini-City Halls” in a number of branches, the office was not only provided with a separate room but a separate entrance from the street. The service was thus branded as something separate and distinct from the library but could still benefit from the library’s location as well as its status within the community as a go-to resource for information and advice.

13. Make libraries a stronger presence in their communities

For libraries to be truly connected to their communities, they must be a palpable presence in their neighborhoods. Libraries must think intentionally about their exterior presentation—including how they communicate to the community that they are an open, welcoming space and a vital community resource for all.

For many libraries that are tucked away on side streets or otherwise hidden from the main pedestrian and transportation centers of their neighborhoods, particular attention needs to be paid to creating an engaging presence. The Wakefield branch in the north Bronx

Where community rooms are located inside the library, how they are branded or packaged to patrons, and what the rules and process are for reserving and using these spaces makes a huge difference to how they are perceived and used by third parties.

and the Arlington branch in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, for instance, are both relatively large Carnegie-era facilities that have struggled to make themselves known in their neighborhoods. Both are only a block away from neighborhood commercial centers, but they are hidden by one- and two-family homes on quiet residential streets. Everything from a building's façade and exterior signage to wayfinding systems on city streets can have a strong effect on people's mental maps of their neighborhood and should be taken seriously when investing in new and renovated facilities. But a neighborhood engagement strategy should also be considered.

Other cultural institutions in New York, as well as urban libraries throughout the country, have demonstrated thoughtful and proactive engagement with their communities. For example, the Queens Museum, which is located deep in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, took a radical approach to overcoming its isolation problem by partnering with talented community organizers to bring art programs, including installations, out of the confines of the museum building, and into the surrounding neighbor-

hoods, including libraries and public plazas. This is also happening in Cleveland, where the Cuyahoga County library partnered with a local hospital to bring more robust services to patients, and in Columbus, where the library's Ready-to-Read program sends librarians into shelters, laundromats, and homes to tackle the literacy crisis in their communities. New York's libraries should take steps to be similarly embedded in their communities. The Uni Project, a mobile unit of books and benches that creates mini reading rooms in outdoor spaces around the city, is just one example of how libraries can extend services beyond their walls. Services could be developed for local schools, senior centers, NYCHA community centers, and public plazas.

Beyond formal service arrangements, branch managers should be empowered to create relationships with community leaders and local organizations, and position themselves as partners in meeting community needs. This means doing more than simply opening their doors and hoping people will come in—it means going to community planning meetings and cultural events to build relationships with area stakeholders. This is starting to happen a little more in the context of participatory budgeting, which more and more City Council members are using to inform how they spend discretionary capital funds. Library initiatives are frequently presented at public meetings, both by residents and by library administrators hoping to see funds dedicated to particular neighborhood library projects. In each of the three years that the city has engaged in participatory budgeting, library initiatives have been funded in at least one district, and many more have ended up on the ballot. While the highly localized nature of participatory budgeting does not allow for a broader discussion of systemwide or citywide needs, it does provide an important starting point and a crucial opportunity for collaboration between library staff and the larger community.



Columbus, OH. Columbus Metropolitan Library's Ready-to-Read program sends librarians into communities to provide literacy services. Photo: Columbus Metropolitan Library

14. Make libraries partners in community resilience planning

Eric Klinenberg, a sociologist who has studied how different neighborhoods responded to a devastating heat wave in Chicago in 1995, argues that communities with a robust social infrastructure—including businesses, public places, and well-maintained roads—are less vulnerable in times of crisis because residents are given the tools and opportunities they need to support and help one another.⁴⁵ Klinenberg cites libraries as particularly important to community resilience because they are familiar and trusted public places. “Every neighborhood in this country should have a designated emergency safe space,” he told NPR during a recent interview, “and it will work well if it’s also a place that people use in their lives every day or every week.”⁴⁶

After Superstorm Sandy, Red Cross workers used the New Dorp library in Staten Island to print out maps and plan their door-to-door house checks.⁴⁷ Libraries in Red Hook and Far Rockaway quickly became places where people could get food and blankets, charge their phones, use the Internet, and share information. Yet libraries have not figured prominently in the city’s post-Sandy planning efforts. In a recent report by the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency that evaluates New York City’s response to Hurricane Sandy, libraries are not mentioned a single time.⁴⁸

“Libraries really became heroes in the aftermath of the storm,” says sustainability expert Rebbekah Aldrich. “But imagine what they could have done if they had actually been part of the planning?”

Because libraries have a footprint in most neighborhoods and are often staffed by local residents, Aldrich argues that libraries are in a prime position to inform disaster preparedness plans in partnership with other city agencies. And they could be even more valuable resources for residents and disaster recovery personnel in the aftermath of the next storm, if the city invested more in their physical resources. Since more than 15 percent of the city’s branches are in need of significant electrical upgrades, for instance, their usefulness as a place where residents and recovery workers can access electricity and technology is limited.

With about \$4.2 billion in federal funding from Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds, and billions more from FEMA Public Assistance and other public and private sources, the city has money to invest in these critical neighborhood assets.⁴⁹ As the city awaits an additional allocation of disaster recovery funds, the Office of Recovery and Resiliency should consider how investing in libraries can add value to their existing community resilience plans.



Following Hurricane Sandy, Queens Library held children’s story time outside Peninsula Branch while adults sought relief assistance. Photo: Queens Library

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

15. Maximize public space

Too many of New York City's branch libraries are inefficiently laid out, with excessive amounts of space either closed off to occupants entirely or devoted to behind-the-scenes administrative purposes. As shown on page 24, 77 branches across the city have 30 percent or more of the building barred to the public, while 26 branches have 40 percent or more so designated.

Many multi-level Carnegie buildings have large underutilized rooms on the upper floors and in the basements. Fourteen, mostly in the NYPL system, have empty custodial apartments that could be reactivated either as publicly accessible community rooms or more specialized rooms for outside organizations to use in exchange for teaching classes or otherwise engaging in the life of the library. But in most cases these spaces haven't been used for decades and would require extensive renovations to bring them up to code.

Even more widespread than closed-off custodial apartments and basements are branches that devote large portions of the building to clerical rooms, large circulation desks, offices for the branch manager and children's librarian, rooms for book processing, staff lounges and private staff bathrooms. Some branches, like Muhlenberg on 23rd Street in Manhattan, reserve separate rooms for all these purposes, using almost as much space for the staff as for the public.

With so many people wanting to spend time in the library to work or play, using too much of the building for behind-the-scenes administrative purposes compromises its effectiveness, especially when buildings are strained for space as it is. According to several of the designers and librarians we spoke to for this report, reserving so much space for staff can also foster an outmoded model of librarianship. NYPL and BPL do the vast majority of their collection management work, including book pur-

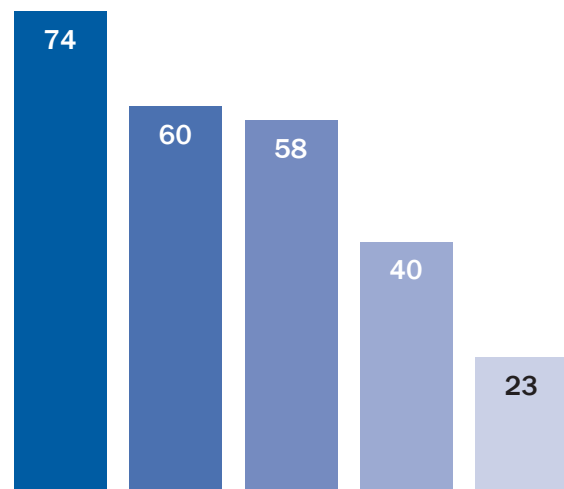
chasing and sorting, in a facility in Long Island City and no longer need to accommodate these activities in the branches. But even the large circulation desks and private offices, which aren't used for the same kind of work, can get in the way of a more spontaneous, active style of customer service.

"You have to design from the perspective of user experience rather than from materials storage," says Margaret Sullivan, an architect with experience designing public libraries. "I think [large circulation desks and offices] are part of a more passive service model," she adds. "Whenever possible, staff and patrons should occupy the same space."

When addressing the growing need for onsite library services, the libraries and city officials should prioritize in-

Top Needs According to NYC Librarians

- ADDITIONAL SPACE FOR QUIET WORK
- ADDITIONAL SPACE FOR GROUP WORK
- DEDICATED TEEN SPACE
- A COMMUNITY ROOM
- DEDICATED CHILDREN'S SPACE



SOURCE: Source: Center for an Urban Future. Survey of 305 New York City librarians and other branch staff.

terior renovations that tap underutilized rooms and minimize onsite administrative space. In addition to expansions at select branches, this would create more space for onsite users by making the most of existing facilities.

16. Maximize flexibility

Modern library buildings have to be flexible in two ways: they have to be versatile enough to serve different constituencies and needs, and they have to be able to change over time in order to better incorporate new services and technologies.

Finding the right balance for those who learn in a noisier, more socialized setting and those who want quiet was one of the biggest concerns raised by librarians in our survey. One tendency in more recently renovated branches is to create separate rooms for different kinds of activities and constituencies: a teen room for teens, for example, a quiet room for solitary readers, a children's library, a computer lab, and bookable study rooms for small groups. But many, if not most, branch buildings aren't big enough to provide separate spaces to meet all of these needs, and some architects believe that an overly balkanized library can detract from what is supposed to be an inspiring and dynamic place. "From a design perspective, there's a risk of the library becoming a Swiss Army knife," says architect Andrew Bernheimer. "You make room for all of these uses but you lose a sense of identity, and the space becomes generic and uninteresting." For this reason, using the same rooms to meet different needs at different times of the day, or doing so at the same times of day and mitigating conflicts with soundproofing and clever furniture arrangements, may be preferable to dividing up the space into lots of different rooms. For larger branches, locating quieter areas deeper in the building, and noisier ones closer to the entrance, where people tend to congregate and socialize, has also proved to be an effective strategy.

At the same time, floor plans have to be versatile enough that branch managers can rearrange furniture as unforeseen needs arise, or if the changes are more dramatic, so that the library can build out new spaces with very little money. "When we built the Bronx Library Center nine years ago, we thought the floor plan was perfect," says NYPL's Director of Capital Projects Joanna Pestka, "but we have moved things around several times now. We have to be able to change layouts quickly without using a lot of capital funds."

At the current rate of change in the consumer technology industry, this is truer now than ever before. New



Mott Haven, Bronx. Modern library buildings have to be versatile enough to serve different constituencies and needs.

technologies make new demands on space. Electrical distribution systems have to be nimble, and seating arrangements have to accommodate the changing use patterns of new devices. Years ago, for example, libraries started to invest in computer labs under the assumption that each computer would be used by just one patron, but this is now changing as more people migrate to portable devices and as more people need to look at the same screen in group settings. To accommodate these new needs, soft-seating areas have to come with plenty of outlets, and newer computer labs need projectors and smart boards. Future technologies will no doubt require different spatial arrangements.

17. Prioritize electrical system upgrades to increase the number of outlets

Of the 45 branches visited for our site surveys, 58 percent had plugs for ten or fewer devices, and 18 percent had plugs for just one or none at all. The ability to find a quiet place to plug in and get some work done is one of the most basic services a library can provide, not just for freelancers but also for students working on school projects, distance learners, and teens who just want to surf the web after school. Ensuring that branches have an adequate number of outlets should be a city-wide priority. In partnership with the libraries, city officials should consider conducting an assessment to identify all the branches in need of electrical upgrades and recommend improvements that would enable the provision of additional outlets.

With so many people wanting to spend time in the library to work or play, using too much of the building for behind-the-scenes administrative purposes compromises its effectiveness, especially when buildings are strained for space as it is.

18. Invest in library hubs that can anchor services for nearby locations

Although many existing neighborhood branches are too small to provide even basic library services—which include providing work spaces, hang-out spaces and community meeting rooms in addition to computers and books—not every branch has to be all things to all people. If the library systems invest in larger buildings in strategic places, they can serve as regional hubs providing a broader range of services than most neighborhood buildings have room for. A regional hub should be located in a denser neighborhood with good transit connections, and it should provide seven days of service and stay open longer during the work week. In addition to more extensive shelving for books and seating for different styles of work and learning, these buildings can offer specialized amenities such as physically divided teen centers, formal classrooms for English learning and other adult literacy classes, maker spaces, auditoriums and job placement centers.

Concentrating a broader range of services in strategically placed hubs would, in turn, allow smaller branches nearby to focus on providing a narrower range of key services. Though every branch will want to offer a core set of services, one satellite branch might devote more resources to those who want a quiet place to work, while another could focus on lounging spaces for noisier school kids.

A so-called “hub-and-spoke” model is how many library systems across the country were originally set up, including to some degree New York’s. The Brooklyn, New York and Queens libraries were all set up with “central” libraries as well as larger buildings in some outlying areas. For instance, the Arlington branch in Cypress Hills was originally called the East Branch and meant to serve the north-eastern region of Brooklyn. But this model was never fully realized, and a coherent network of services never fully articulated. Over the decades, new buildings were created in growing neighborhoods—but now they’re too

small to meet local demand. A few older regional branches are now left to serve a much smaller community than originally intended. Similarly, as new library administrations have pursued a succession of different programs and strategies, new specialized facilities have been developed in close proximity to existing libraries, which has resulted in a heavy concentration of resources in just a few areas. Although NYPL’s research libraries are destination facilities that serve patrons all over the city and, indeed, the world, until recently 43 percent of the library’s total physical plant was concentrated in just a 20-block stretch along 5th Avenue in Midtown Manhattan. The Main library at 42nd Street (now called the Schwarzman building), the Science Industry and Business Library on 34th Street, Mid-Manhattan on 40th Street and Donnell on 53rd Street together accounted for over 1 million of the system’s 2.3 million square feet of library space. By downsizing the Donnell facility from 97,000 square feet to 28,000 and incorporating SIBL in a new renovated space either at 42nd Street or Mid-Manhattan, NYPL is taking steps to reduce the concentration of resources in this area, which could free up expense funds for hubs in other parts of the city.

The Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) has a large central library as well as several hubs spread out across its service area. CML’s hub facilities are not as big as the main library, but they are larger than their neighborhood branches and they stay open longer during the week. In New York, similar hub facilities exist on Fordham Road in the Bronx, where NYPL built the 64,000 square foot Bronx Library Center in 2006, and Flushing in Queens, where the Queens Library built an even larger 76,000-square-foot facility in 1999. But outside of the two Central libraries in Brooklyn and Queens, few other buildings are equipped to serve effectively as regional service centers. From a purely geographic standpoint, the Mid-Manhattan and St. George libraries would be natural places to develop regional hubs, but Mid-Manhattan, which already has

capital funding in place, is in need of a full renovation to replace its mechanical equipment and make more effective use of space, and St. George, which sits across from the Staten Island Borough Hall, needs a new HVAC system and full interior renovation. In Northern Manhattan, Countee Cullen and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a world-class research library specializing in African-American history, are located in separate but contiguous buildings with tens of millions in state of good repair needs. A true hub-and-spoke plan would seek to combine the services of both locations in just one well-designed facility, one that could be a center for both researchers and residents all over northern Manhattan.

Meanwhile, the Brooklyn Public Library has been evaluating ways to expand resources in the Kings Highway, New Utrecht, and New Lots branches to serve a wider public in southern and eastern Brooklyn, but none of these buildings can accommodate the range and quality of services that can be found in the Bronx Library Center and Flushing Library. Queens would do well to look at developing regional hubs in western Queens, southern Queens and the Rockaway Peninsula, as these areas are far from Flushing and Jamaica, where the system's current regional libraries are located. But, as with NYPL and BPL, the branches that are in the most promising locations to fill this role—e.g. Jackson Heights, Long Island City, Ridgewood and Far Rockaway—are generally too small to accommodate a full range of resources and services.

When investing in new branch facilities, the libraries need to do a much better job of defining the service areas of their facilities as well as how they link together to form a coherent network of services. And OMB needs to take these considerations seriously when making critical funding decisions. Right now, OMB tends to view each facility in a vacuum. For instance, according to staff at the Queens Library, a newly designed Far Rockaway branch would have more than doubled the current building size—from 9,000 to 22,000 square feet—but OMB required a smaller facility because the library's current operating budget, it said, couldn't support the larger proposal. With over 60,000 residents in its service area and the distance residents have to travel to the nearest library hub, a larger facility—larger even than the library's original proposal—should have been easy to justify.⁵⁰

19. Co-develop libraries with affordable housing

In a number of cases, rebuilding branches as a part of a larger development could be an effective way to reduce the costs of new construction, even while increasing the size of branches and improving the links between library buildings and the communities they serve. In other cities, libraries have been co-developed with public schools, theaters, museums and commercial facilities, but in New York, where the demand for housing is driving up the city's already high cost of living, there is a powerful rationale for locating them inside new residential projects.

Potential Library/Affordable Housing Co-Developments

BRANCH	CURRENT					PROPOSED		
	CAPITAL NEEDS	BLDG	LOT	MAX FAR	MAX FA	LIBRARY SQFT	RESIDENTIAL SQFT	HOUSING UNITS
Brooklyn Heights (B)	\$9.2M	62,917	26,848	10	268,480	20,000	248,480	248
Bloomingtondale (M)	\$10.4M	20,381	46,076	6.5	299,494	20,000	234,494	234
Kips Bay (M)	\$6.2M	9,400	4,938	12	59,256	9,876	49,380	49
Inwood (M)	\$2.8M	17,334	11,825	6.5	76,863	20,000	56,863	57
Brighton Beach (B)	\$4.7M	12,166	15,498	4.8	74,390	20,000	54,390	54
Grand Concourse (Bx)	\$8.5M	18,670	8,864	6.5	57,616	20,000	37,616	38
Peninsula (Q)	N/A	12,750	22,500	2	45,000	20,000	25,000	25
Francis Martin (Bx)	\$7.3M	13,300	9,100	4.8	43,680	20,000	23,680	24
Belmont (Bx)	\$8M	20,000	8,750	4.8	42,000	20,000	22,000	22
Sunset Park (B)	N/A	12,174	10,017	4	40,068	20,000	20,068	20

Source: Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, Queens Library and the Department of City Planning's Zoning and Land Use Application

For this study, we identified ten branches across the city that we felt would benefit from a new building and are located on lots whose size and zoning would allow construction of apartment units in addition to a new branch.⁵¹ Collectively, these branches have over \$57 million in capital needs and because of poor layouts struggle to meet the needs of their communities. They were built between 1952 and 1981 and have no obvious architectural or historical value. A number are Lindsay boxes, stretched desperately for space.

By rebuilding these branches inside of residential buildings, the city could save tens of millions in capital costs on new library branches, while accommodating over 772,000 square feet (772 units) of new housing. As the table above shows, the Brooklyn Heights branch on Cadman Plaza in Downtown Brooklyn could accommodate a new 20,000-square-foot library and 248 units of housing. The Bloomingdale branch on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, which shares space with the Department of Health, could accommodate a new 20,000-square-foot branch as well as a 45,000-square-foot public health clinic and 234 units of housing. The Kips Bay site on Third Avenue in East Midtown could fit a 9,876-square-foot branch on the lower floors and 49 units of housing on top.⁵²

At a time when housing is in such short supply, using library properties to build so many new units would be a significant accomplishment all by itself. But the libraries—and the communities that depend on them—stand to gain enormously as well. Because the Business Library at Brooklyn Heights is being relocated to the Central Library at Grand Army Plaza, the public space square footage for branch services would actually increase in that neighborhood despite being housed in a smaller facility. Similarly, due to the space allocation efficiencies of co-locations, public space square footage would double at both Brighton Beach and Sunset Park, and increase dramatically at Peninsula and Francis Martin. Meanwhile, eight out of the ten branches with significant state of good repair needs would receive entirely new facilities at a much lower cost to the libraries; and the sale of development rights at Bloomington, Kips Bay and Brooklyn Heights could generate millions of dollars in additional renovation funds, potentially benefiting over a dozen other branches.⁵³ Though the Peninsula branch, which was badly damaged in Hurricane Sandy, already has funding in place for a new building, siting the new branch in a larger, more technologically advanced building could bolster its defenses against future storms and flooding—not to

mention its ability to serve during any future community recovery efforts.

Fitting new branches inside larger residential properties also has the potential to improve street life by adding residential density in areas that can support it. The Sunset Park branch, for example, is a one story box located on the corner of a wide avenue in southern Brooklyn. Developing space for residents in the immediate vicinity of the library could help rejuvenate the Fourth Avenue commercial district and improve the library's visibility in the neighborhood. The areas around the Peninsula, Brighton Beach, Brooklyn Heights and Inwood branches could all benefit in similar ways. But, as with all library co-locations, good design has an important role to play. The libraries have to make sure their facilities are visibly and functionally separate from the rest of the building, with a separate entrance and clear visibility from the street. Ideally, there will be little or no setback from the sidewalk, so that the interior of the library can be viewed by pedestrians outside.

Several projects (at Brooklyn Heights, Bloomingdale and Kips Bay) could be developed under the city's inclusionary housing program (at either 80/20 or 70/30) and generate significant revenue for additional branch renovations. Others (including Sunset Park, Grand Concourse, Francis Martin and Belmont) could be financed through a variety of different federal, state and city programs that provide tax credits and capital for low-income housing and supportive housing for the elderly. Still others could be developed as offsite components to nearby market-rate developments seeking a density bonus under the inclusionary housing program (Inwood and Brighton Beach).

Finally, although we considered only as-of-right opportunities, many of these branches—and many others not considered—could accommodate more housing than the current zoning allows. This is especially true in Queens, where a number of small Lindsay boxes (such as Rego Park and Sunnyside) sit on wide thoroughfares in districts with low-density zoning. A mixed-use community facility on some of these sites could be promising candidates for a zoning variance.

20. Invest in joyful spaces

Successful libraries have recognized that the space itself is an integral part of the service they provide, and it should be a joyful, vibrant space that inspires creativity and fosters a sense of discovery. What's more, transforming a children's room or even an entire library doesn't have to involve expensive renovations. For under

\$150,000, Lonni Tanner of SeeChangeNYC and Biber Architects recently remade the drab, institutional interior of the Stone Avenue branch in Brooklyn into a dynamic space for both kids and adults. They covered the walls of one room—the so-called “Room of Words”—in nearly 1,000 of the Fry Words that every school child should know, intermixing Lewis Carroll-like critical thinking questions such as “When is the sky happy?” They created a much warmer space for patrons with new, colorful carpeting, better lighting, electrified tables and wing-back reading chairs.

“If you want to energize the space, you have to create some excitement and joy,” says architect James Biber.

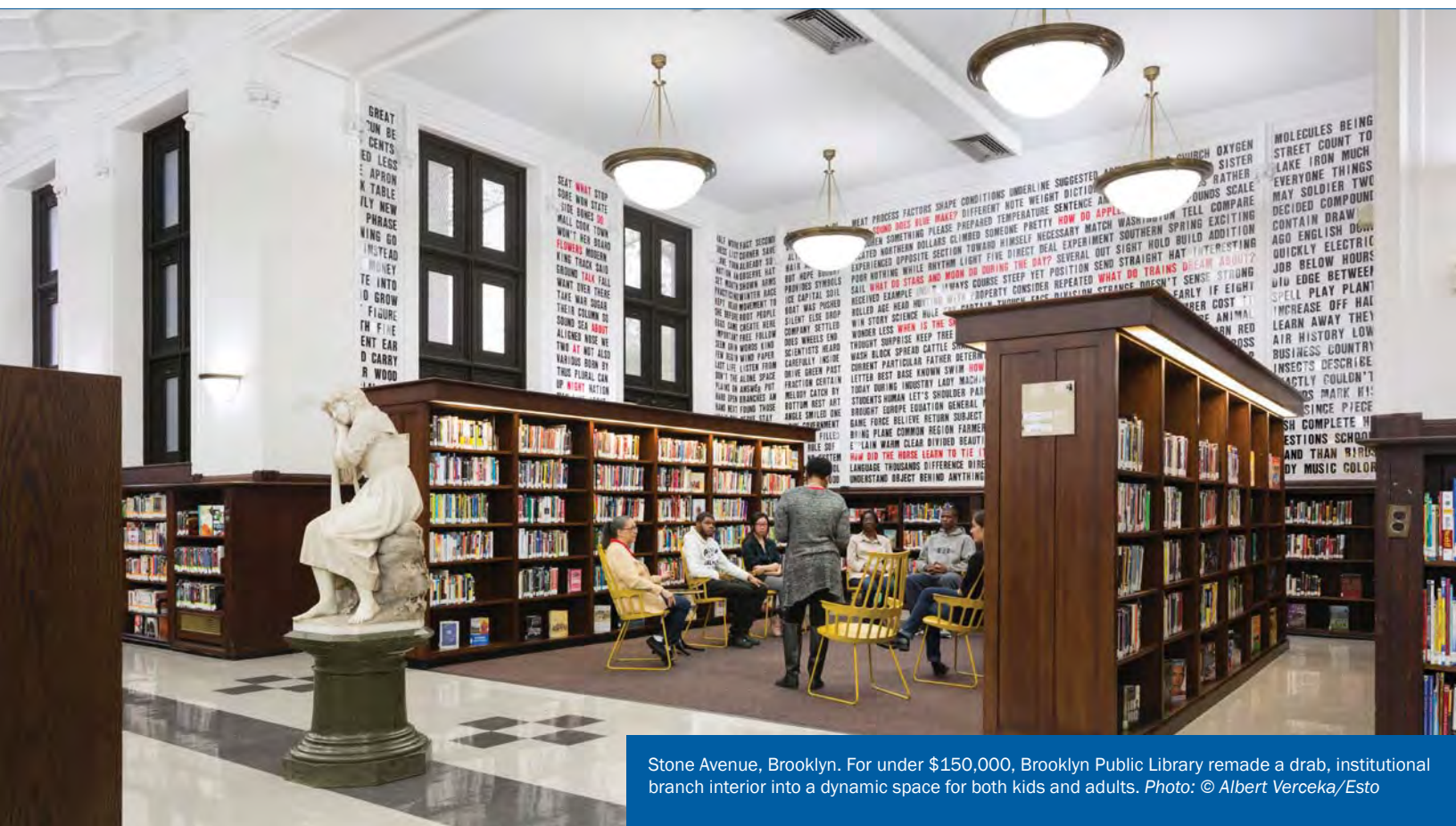
Though many, if not most, of these changes wouldn’t qualify for capital funds outside of a larger capital project, the libraries could raise money from private sources and use expense funds to brighten and upgrade the interiors of many more neighborhood libraries. They could invest in a toolbox of designs and ideas—including everything from activity walls and posters to lighting and seating arrangements—and then draw on capital funds to strategically upgrade furniture and equipment. For the Stone Avenue makeover, Lonni Tanner went beyond mere decoration to create a template for light-hearted community engagement. Neighborhood residents, even nearby bodega workers, were given black T-shirts with one of the 1,000 Fry Words on them. The key is to be playful, she says, as

well as critical, provocative and engaging. “I would use the fence for installations,” she says, “using words and poems. I would hang words from the trees and write recipes on the walls. I would create an inconvenience store where kids could take blocks and crafts home, or a maker space where they could build a desk to bring home.”

21. Use outdoor spaces more effectively to create opportunities for programming and civic engagement

A number of library buildings sit on sizable lots in dense residential neighborhoods with ample pedestrian traffic, yet the grounds outside are fenced off from the sidewalk and used as an aesthetic gesture rather than an active, participatory space. At a time when neighborhood civic spaces are so rare, this is an enormous lost opportunity. With the success of the Department of Transportation’s public plaza program, it is increasingly clear that New Yorkers are hungry for places where they can hang out outside, read the paper, watch pedestrians, and run into neighbors.

Queens, in particular, is home to a number of library buildings with extensive grounds—some of them with lawns and large trees—fenced off from the sidewalk and never used by the library or surrounding community. The Richmond Hill branch, for example, has 34,000 square feet (three quarters of an acre) of outdoor space, while



Stone Avenue, Brooklyn. For under \$150,000, Brooklyn Public Library remade a drab, institutional branch interior into a dynamic space for both kids and adults. Photo: © Albert Verceka/Esto

Ridgewood has 21,000 square feet and Queens Village 19,000. The grade changes at Ridgewood could make the area facing Forest Avenue on the side of the building a great place for an amphitheater, where people could sit and eat lunch, listen to readings and watch public events. Richmond Hill's fenced-off lawn, meanwhile, could be turned into an outdoor reading garden with plenty of seating, plugs and WiFi for those who want to work or play chess outside. Other branches sit on smaller lots but still have plenty of space in front of the building for place-making interventions such as furniture, signage and art. These include McGoldrick on Northern Boulevard in Flushing, Long Island City on 21st Street, North Forest Park in Forest Hills, Broadway in Woodside, and Steinway in Astoria.

In Brooklyn too, a lot of library buildings are cut off from the sidewalk and surrounding community by outdated wrought-iron fences. At Carroll Gardens, for instance, there is a ten-foot clearance between the front of the building and the fence next to the sidewalk. If the fence were taken down the sidewalk could be extended and benches and lighting added. Similarly, at the Bedford branch on Franklin Avenue near Fulton Street, a path surrounds the building on all four sides. If the fence were removed, the path area could be used for seating in an otherwise crowded neighborhood with few parks. Both the Walt Whitman and Arlington branches in northern Brooklyn have front lawns secured behind wrought-iron fencing. Because both buildings are relatively hidden from nearby pedestrian centers, opening up the lawns for public use could be part of a larger strategy to increase their visibility in the neighborhood.

Relatively few NYPL branches, by contrast, use fences. Most Manhattan branches come right up to the sidewalk, as do many branches in the South Bronx. The Wakefield branch in the northern Bronx is surrounded by fences, and Westchester Square has a front courtyard. But, overall, opportunities for outdoor placemaking are comparatively rare in the NYPL system.

22. Expand the libraries' footprint with storefront spaces in retail corridors and transit centers

Although many librarians will remember storefront libraries as a failed experiment of the 1960s and 70s, new technologies and patron expectations have made these spaces viable again—exciting even as supplemental outposts to more traditional, full-service branches.⁵⁴ Forty years ago, storefront branches were understood to be

cheaper alternatives to stand-alone buildings, but their purpose was more or less identical: to warehouse a collection of books and other materials for patrons in their service area. But due to their small size, they struggled to provide enough space for people to work and mingle on-site.

Today's patrons, by contrast, can make use of a vast online catalogue with increasingly sophisticated browsing tools and have any book in the collection delivered to their closest branch. This frees up the humble retail library to be a place for people rather than just books. Space can be made available for book orders and returns and perhaps even a few curated shelves, while making the vast majority of the space available for onsite services and amenities, such as worktables, soft seating, computers, events and exhibitions. And because modern retail spaces are so flexible, storefront branches can be shaped to an even greater extent than standalone libraries by their communities. One storefront could devote more space to computers, for example, while another is given over to exhibitions and workshops; one could specialize in after-school programming, while another serves as a "mind gym" for seniors.

Retail spaces also lend themselves to rapid transformations, either over the course of a single day to make way for a rapidly revolving list of events, or over months and years as user preferences become clearer or demographic shifts create a demand for new services. The space can be converted from a coffeeshop during the day, for example, into an event space in the evening. Or, as the demand for some programs and amenities outstrip others, it can go from serving freelancers with lots of soft seating and coffee, to young families who would prefer cork flooring and a wide variety of toddler programs. In Oak Park, Illinois, for example, as usage patterns were re-evaluated, the library transformed a malleable storefront space at the front of one of its branches from a cafe into a shop-window studio for artists to produce and display new work.⁵⁵

In New York, storefront branches would be a creative and cost-effective way to expand the libraries' footprint. New locations could be added in rapidly developing waterfront areas like Dumbo (which still doesn't have a library), Williamsburg/Greenpoint, Halletts Point and Hudson Yards. They could be added in high-volume pedestrian and retail corridors like the Hub in the South Bronx or Fulton Mall in Downtown Brooklyn. Locations could be added inside of popular shopping malls like the Queens Center Mall in Rego Park, where the Queens Li-

brary is currently creating an express location, the Staten Island Mall or the new Pier 17 in lower Manhattan. Or they could be put inside transit hubs like Jamaica Station, the St. George and Whitehall Ferry Terminals, Penn Station, Grand Central Terminal, and even La Guardia and JFK airports. To be sure, all of these locations will make very different kinds of demands on a new library, but retail spaces are flexible enough that the services can be tailored to their specific environment and can change over time as some prove to be more successful than others.

23. Develop branches and spaces designed specifically for freelance workers

The libraries should seek input from the Freelancers Union and other organizations that serve freelancers and independent contractors—including established co-working organizations like WeWork—and develop several branches that cater specifically to this growing population. A freelancer library would likely stay open later and offer plenty of electrical outlets and seating spaces for patrons with their own computers, and they would need to be located in dense, transit rich areas of the city like downtown Brooklyn, lower Manhattan, Long Island City, St. George and the Hub in the South Bronx. According to the Coalition for Queens, a nonprofit focused on expanding the tech sector, Queens, in particular, has a dearth of services for independent workers in creative industries like technology and design, including just one coworking space and one small business incubator.

24. Find spaces to test out new ideas and services

For libraries to be a true resource to the community, they must be able to grow and adapt as community needs change. Many library systems across the country and abroad have created beta spaces within their facilities to test out new services, programs, partnerships and technology in an ongoing effort to improve service and increase community involvement. The Chattanooga Public Library, for instance, recently converted an underutilized space on the fourth floor of the main library downtown into a technology-focused “public laboratory” that can be used both by professionals and curious patrons alike. Part workshare space for budding tech entrepreneurs, part creative space for hobbyists, library director Corinne Hill insists on flexibility and experimentation. “We’re all trying to figure it out and the public is helping us,” she says. “In order to figure out what we’re going to do in the future to move forward, I think libraries, all industries ac-



tually, need a beta space where you can try new services and fail or really succeed, while you continue to offer your traditional services.”

In Brooklyn, the second floor of the landmarked Williamsburgh branch was recently converted into artist studios and rehearsal spaces by an arts nonprofit called SpaceWorks. Like Chattanooga’s Fourth Floor, the space was underutilized and need of repair, and SpaceWorks covered the cost of renovations. But beyond making better use of the space, the partnership has the potential to attract new patrons to the library and increase its visibility in an area of Williamsburg that can seem tucked away and off the beaten path. SpaceWorks is developing additional studio space in Red Hook, but the partnership model could work in a number of other buildings with extensive untapped square footage, including the Arlington and Leonard branches in Brooklyn and the Muhlenberg and Epiphany branches in Manhattan. Located on 23rd Street near a growing cluster of tech and creative firms, the upper floors of Muhlenberg and Epiphany could be transformed into beta spaces for nearby tech entrepreneurs.

However, beta sites shouldn’t be limited to existing underutilized spaces. Knud Schulz, manager of the Main Library in Aarhus, Denmark, says that new libraries should incorporate unprogrammed space that library staff members can program together with the users. With no major build-out, the space remains flexible and can change with patron needs, which allows the library to evolve and keep the dialogue open about its role in the community. Moreover, incubating an idea in a small unprogrammed library space can be an effective way to demonstrate ideas to outside funders.

1. This is a rough calculation based on the libraries' average service hours per week, which in FY2013 was approximately 43. We define a day as 10 hours, so in FY2013 the libraries were open approximately 224 days.
2. As of March 2014. At that time, nearly all of the \$1.1 billion was unfunded.
3. These are conservative figures as we did not have details for all branches in need of major renovations, many of which could include one or more of the improvements listed.
4. Agency comparisons of administration and discretionary capital funding are based on capital commitments (rather than appropriations or planned commitments) for Fiscal Years 2004 to 2013. The New York City Independent Budget Office helped compile these numbers, using the city's Financial Management System.
5. Annual expenditures were adjusted for inflation using constant 2013 dollars. Though much of the spending on cultural groups in FY2003, FY2004 and FY2005 may have been appropriated during the previous administration, the city has not yet spent over \$600 million in capital funding that was appropriated and approved under Bloomberg. (The FY2013 Commitment Plan includes \$606 million in approved cultural capital projects, and the FY2014 Commitment Plan includes over \$750 million in projects.) As a result, a more detailed analysis of capital spending on cultural groups under Bloomberg, we believe, would show an even bigger increase in capital spending over previous administrations.
6. For purposes of our physical plant analysis, we are counting only permanent, circulating community branches. We exclude swing spaces for buildings under construction (in Kew Gardens Hills, Elmhurst and Far Rockaway), offsite buildings that aren't being used as circulating library branches (Queens' adult literacy centers in the Ravenswood and Queensbridge Houses and in the Central annex), NYPL's research libraries, and new branches currently in design or construction (NYPL's 53rd Street and Rossville, and QBPL's Elmhurst and Hunter's Point), and Queens' Far Rockaway Teen Annex. Because BPL's Business and Career Library is housed in the same building as the Brooklyn Heights branch library, the two libraries are counted as one for our spatial analysis.
7. In addition to the 15 library buildings constructed by the city, six new branches were located in spaces within larger, mixed-use developments or pre-existing buildings.
8. For buildings that date from John Lindsay's mayoralty, which went from 1966 to 1973, we included buildings that were built in 1974 and 1975, since many of these share the same general design features and were probably designed in earlier years.
9. DC Public Library, "Library Building Program." Retrieved from: <http://dclibrary.org/node/616>.
10. According to one widely used library planning and development document written by Anders Dahlgren, greater Jackson Heights, with a population of approximately 108,000, should have a library with 243 reader seats; using the Columbus Metropolitan Library's metric, it should have 270 reader seats. See Anders Dahlgren, "Public Library Space Needs, A Planning Outline / 2009," Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, p. 15, retrieved from http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/pld_plspace and Columbus Metropolitan Library, "2030 Vision Plan Draft Report, Executive Summary." May 13, 2009, p. 22, retrieved from http://ebranch.columbuslibrary.org/docs/ebranch/CML_FACILITIES_PLAN.pdf.
11. In fiscal year 13, McKinley Park ranked tenth by number of visitors across the city.
12. Based on library space planning assessments and online conference/event planning calculators.
13. We also did not count powerstrips, since this is generally not a permanent solution.
14. We were able to obtain the square feet of space dedicated to bookshelves for 56 of BPL's branches. Due to recent changes in their interiors, we don't have information for the Central, King's Highway, or Macon branches.
15. Shannon Mattern, "Library as Infrastructure," *Places: Design Observer*, June 9, 2014.
16. All annual expenditures going back to 1994 were adjusted for inflation using constant 2013 values, and these figures include spending on research libraries. The comparison to previous administrations is imperfect, since funds spent in fiscal years 2003, 2004 and even 2005 may have been appropriated before Mayor Bloomberg took office.
17. Independent Budget Office and the New York City Financial Management System. Capital commitments reflect the value of contracts registered by the New York City Comptroller's Office, but they are not the same thing as expenditures, which measure actual payments from city coffers. In this report, capital commitments by source do not reflect state, federal or private funding sources.
18. A majority of these funds are now going toward the renovation of the Mid-Manhattan Library.
19. Since 2010, 97 branches have received capital investments of some kind; 77 still have outstanding SOGR needs, and 62 have needs worth at least \$1 million.
20. According to Brooklyn Public Library, the average cost and duration of recent and similarly scoped renovations was \$576 per square foot and six and a half years when managed by the city but only \$325 per square foot and less than a year and a half when they managed projects themselves. In Queens, the renovation of

- the Queensboro Hill branch, managed by the city, took 2 years and cost \$953 per square foot, while the library-managed renovation of the Fresh Meadows branch was completed in under a year at \$109 per square foot. Neither Brooklyn nor Queens's library systems have managed (and completed) their own new construction projects in recent years, but the DDC managed the construction of the new Kensington branch in Brooklyn, which took about 13 years to complete and cost \$853 per square foot.
21. Anthony Cresswell, *Broadband Internet Service Adoption and Use in New York State Households*, Center for Technology in Government, May 10, 2011, p.11.
 22. The FCC Office of Engineering and Technology and Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, *Measuring Broadband America* – 2014.
 23. City of Chicago, “City of Chicago 2013 Budget Overview,” p. 85. Retrieved from: http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/obm/supp_info/2013%20Budget/2013Overview.pdf.
 24. The Seattle Public Library. “Libraries for All – A Report to the Community,” September 12, 2008. Retrieved from: https://www.spl.org/Documents/about/libraries_for_all_report.pdf
 25. Los Angeles Public Library, “Building on Success: Los Angeles Public Library Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010.” Retrieved from: http://www.lapl.org/sites/default/files/media/pdf/about/Strategic_Plan.pdf
 26. San Francisco Public Library, “Branch Library Improvement Program.” Retrieved from: <http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=0000017301>
 27. Columbus Metropolitan Library, “2030 Vision Plan Draft Report, Executive Summary,” May 13, 2009, pg. v. Retrieved from: http://ebranch.columbuslibrary.org/docs/ebranch/CML_FACILITIES_PLAN.pdf
 28. The Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project consistently demonstrates that Americans value libraries, with their March 2014 report showing that 90 percent of Americans over the age of 16 feel the closing of their local library would have an impact on their community. See Kathryn Sickuhr, Kristen Purcell, and Lee Rainie, “From Distant Admirers to Library Lovers – and Beyond: a typology of public library engagement in America,” March 13, 2014.
 29. Meredith Schwartz, “Columbus Library Notes Sell Out,” *Library Journal*, February 12, 2013.
 30. The Seattle Public Library, “Libraries for All – A Report to the Community,” September 12, 2008, p.6. Retrieved from: https://www.spl.org/Documents/about/libraries_for_all_report.pdf.
 31. Public Works Partners and New Yorkers for Parks, “A Survey of Capital Projects Management Among New York City Government Agencies,” June 4, 2014, p.9. <http://www.ny4p.org/research/other-reports/Capital%20Projects%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
 32. Ibid, p.10.
 33. Kristen Meriwether, “The City Council Moves Forward on Reform,” *Gotham Gazette*, April 30, 2014.
 34. For NYPL’s averages, city managed major renovations include: High Bridge, Jerome Park, Mulberry Street, St. Agnes, and Woodstock. NYPL managed major renovations include: Grand Central, the Hamilton Grange Teen Center, The Library Services Center, and Washington Heights. City managed new construction projects include: Kingsbridge, Mariners Harbor and Stapleton. NYPL managed new construction projects include: the Bronx Library Center, Battery Park City, and 53rd Street (still under construction). For Brooklyn and Queens project numbers see footnote 20.
 35. The Office of the New York City Comptroller, “Directive 10—Charges to the Capital Projects Fund,” May 31, 2011. Retrieved from: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/nfpp/Dir10-CapitalProjectsFund\[1\].pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/nfpp/Dir10-CapitalProjectsFund[1].pdf)
 36. For an overview of the Urban Libraries Council’s advocacy on E-Rate reform, see: <http://www.urbanlibraries.org/e-rate-pages-228.php>
 37. Despite its relative newness, the Long Island City branch ranks 151 out of 207 in visitors per square foot.
 38. See Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, Simon and Schuster, 2003, pp. 34-54. “The library and the mayor hoped that locating Near North on the border between Cabrini Green and The Gold Coast would accomplish two things: encourage other improvements in Cabrini and bring together residents of two neighborhoods who had virtually no contact with one another.”
 39. See “Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan,” p.29. Retrieved from: http://www.nyc.gov/html/housing/assets/downloads/pdf/housing_plan.pdf
 40. Carl Vogel, “A new role for local libraries and museums,” LISC Institute for Comprehensive Community Development, June 9, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.instituteccd.org/news/5016>
 41. For more on this important point, see Shannon Mattern, “Library as Infrastructure,” *Places: Design Observer*, June 9, 2014
 42. Lauren Pongan, “The Bubbler, a New Madison Public Library Program, Finds Innovative Ways to Connect Creative Types,” *Isthmus Daily Page*, April 11, 2013.
 43. Libraries across the country are starting to open their doors to certain kinds of commercial activities and organizations. The main library in Salt Lake City, for instance, incorporates small shops in an arcade called the Urban Room, but they are carefully

- curated to promote the library's ethos. In the Urban Room, there is a comic book store, for instance, a community radio station, and a library store operated by a Friends of the Library group. See Mattern, "Libraries as Infrastructure." Libraries could state openly that the third parties who charge for their classes in branch libraries have to promote sharing in the community. Weight Watchers might not meet this standard, but the League of Kitchens may very well. On the League of Kitchens, see Justin Rocket Silverman, "The League of Kitchens is a UN of cooking, teaching international cuisine," *New York Daily News*, March 23, 2014.
44. Single Stop USA has an office in the Bronx Library Center.
 45. Urban Omnibus, "Toward a Stronger Social Infrastructure: A Conversation with Eric Klinenberg." October 16, 2013.
 46. Here and Now with Robin Young and Jeremy Hobson. "Sociologist: For Better Disaster Readiness, Build More Libraries." Retrieved from: <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2013/10/25/disaster-public-spaces>
 47. Joel Rose, "For Disaster Preparedness: Pack a Library Card?" *National Public Radio*. August 12, 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.npr.org/2013/08/12/210541233/for-disasters-pack-a-first-aid-kit-bottled-water-and-a-library-card>
 48. William Goldstein, Amy Peterson, Daniel A. Zarrilli, "One City, Rebuilding Together: A Report on the City of New York's Response to Hurricane Sandy and The Path Forward," April 2014, p. 8. Retrieved from: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/reports/2014/sandy_041714.pdf. Although it states that the city has allocated over \$800 million for infrastructure and other city services, including rehabilitation/reconstruction of public facilities, libraries are not specifically mentioned.
 49. According to the city's CDBG-DR Action Plan, the city has received two allocations of CDBG DR funding: \$1.77 billion in March 2013 and \$1.477 billion in November 2013. The third allocation is expected to be nearly \$1 billion. Retrieved from: http://www.nyc.gov/html/cdbg/html/approved/action_plan.shtml.
 50. Using the Columbus Metropolitan Library's standards, a service area as large as Far Rockaway would require a 35,000-square-foot branch. See "2030 Vision Plan Draft Report," p. 21-26.
 51. The Pratt Center for Community Development conducted a similar (unpublished) study in 2008 and identified 35 branches that could accommodate significant residential development under current zoning laws. They modeled construction at four sites in detail, including Brighton Beach, Marcy (since downzoned), Kips Bay, and Grand Concourse.
 52. The Kips Bay site has a commercial FAR of 2.0, which would limit the library to under 10,000 square feet. But additional space could be built below grade, or the project could seek a zoning variance for a larger branch.
 53. A new David Adjaye-designed affordable housing complex in the Sugar Hill neighborhood of Harlem, housing a 15,000-square-foot children's museum on the ground floor, was recently built at a cost of \$276 per square foot. See Justin Davidson, "In Harlem, the Sugar Hill Complex Reimagines Affordable Housing as an Arty Fortress," *New York Magazine*, June 9, 2014.
 54. Nate Hill, "Library Outposts, a new service model for urban public libraries," Wordpress, March 15, 2008. <http://natehill.wordpress.com/2008/03/15/library-outposts-a-new-service-model-for-urban-public-libraries/>
 55. The Library as Incubator Project, "Live Art and Community Participation in the Oak Park Public Library Idea Box." June 26, 2013. <http://www.libraryasincubatorproject.org/?p=5025>
 56. Response rates for individual questions may vary, as respondents were not required to answer every question, and some questions allowed respondents to select multiple answers. Percentages are out of 302 total surveys unless otherwise noted.
 57. Rhonda Abrams, "Pricey High Speed Internet Hurts Entrepreneurs," *USA Today*, May 9, 2014.
 58. SPARK Ohio, "Results." Retrieved from: <http://sparkohio.org/results/>.

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