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Just So You Know
A New Strategic Plan for the Dallas Public Library System was adopted last year.

The Dallas City Council last year unanimously approved a new strategic plan for Dallas Public Library, which indicated the library system, with its 29 branches and Central Library location, was well positioned geographically to meet the future needs of residents, but that upgrades and renovations would be needed at most of the branch library locations. For the Central Library, it was recommended that a major renovation occur sometime in the future.

The plan also referenced the need for more programming resources to be developed for the system. Currently, most of the City budget goes to support facilities and staffing, with most programming funds coming from third parties such as the Friends of the Dallas Public Library. Last year, the Friends of the Dallas Public Library pledged at least \$350,000 in program support funding to the library for the next five years.

Yet, budget cuts were proposed last year

At the same time the strategic plan was being adopted last year, the Dallas City Manager proposed eliminating one library location to help balance its budget. Proposals to cut library services are not unusual. Dallas has a history of cutting library services to help balance its budget. 2024 was no exception. Faced with state-imposed limits on budget increases and the loss of federal funding, the Dallas City Manager proposed closing the Skillman Southwestern Branch Library and cutting an additional \$2 million from the library budget to help balance the city's budget.

The Skillman Southwestern Branch only remained open due to a Councilmember allocating \$500,000 from their district's COVID/disaster fund, but library funding was still cut by \$1.4 million in FY25 and proposed to be cut by \$1.8 million in FY26.

The Skillman Southwestern Branch remains at risk of closure, as it is not included in the City's preliminary proposed 2025-2026 budget passed last year by the Council. Experience shows that budget cuts made to the Dallas Public Library (DPL) can take years – even decades – to be restored. Also, we believe closing the Skillman Southwestern Branch directly contradicts the Library's new strategic plan.

Our library system has a direct impact on thousands of residents' lives every day.

It is a vital resource for our Dallas community:

- Nearly 9 million items were checked out from DPL in 2024.
- 688,257 Dallas residents hold a DPL library card.
- 237,690 patrons attended 15,992 library programs – a 33% increase over 2023.
- 15,829 meals and snacks were served at DPL branches during the summer.
- 692 library volunteers contributed 14,344 hours of service.

DPL staff attended 1,683 offsite events and engaged with 95,384 people about library services.

- Dallas residents are estimated to have saved \$30 million last year by using free resources, services, and programs offered by DPL.

Dallas Public Library Makes a Major Impact

Our Dallas public library system has been and continues to be a valued community resource impacting our city every day.

Do you have a Dallas Public Library card?

Over the past 12 months, have you visited a Dallas Public Library location either online or in person?

Which DPL location(s) have you visited?

Do you believe that libraries are important?

Do you believe libraries are adequately funded in Dallas?

Dallas Public Library has 29 branch locations in every corner of the city in addition to the Central Library across from City Hall. At present, only one DPL location is open 7 days a week (Vickery Park branch). There are 27 locations open 6 days a week, and 2 locations are only open 5 days per week. Do you support having all 30 locations open 7 days a week?

Dallas Public Library is more than just books. It provides GED classes, preschool story times, ELL classes, promotes adult literacy, offers small business support, free internet access, senior programs, assists with resumes, job searches and job applications FOR FREE to all Dallas residents. Most of these programs are made possible thanks to private funding - the City of Dallas provides little programming money. Would you support the City of Dallas providing more public funding to programs?

The Dallas Public Library's materials budget to purchase books, media, ebooks/e-audiobooks, and databases has remained essentially flat for the last several years. At the same time, publishers providing these materials continue to increase their costs for both physical and digital materials. If elected, will you support additional increases up to \$500,000 in next year's budget to help our library catch up on needed materials?

YES

After now knowing that the Dallas library system is one of the poorest funded per capita among similarly sized cities, do you believe that Dallas should increase its library funding on a per capita basis?

YES

Would you accept, under any circumstances (Prop U), to eliminate any of our branch library locations in order to balance our city budget?

NO

Now that you know more about the services provided by the Dallas Public Library, and the financial challenges it faces, if elected, will you commit to continuing to responsibly grow the library's operating budget?

YES

If yes, what are your ideas?

I think COVID showed all of us the importance of our local libraries as hubs for places to gather, access the internet, and the gaps that exists between how our libraries are currently utilized and funded and how they could be better supported. I believe libraries need to be open an accessible every day of the week and for longer hours; however, the funding and access don't currently support that. Economic development and a pro-business attitude are central parts of my plans and campaign. We have to bring in new revenue to meet pension obligations and avoid cuts. If we are able to stabilize our budget how I believe we will be able to, I'd like to increase engagement and interaction with our libraries, programming them heavily and ensuring there is dedicated transportation from all corners of our community to the libraries for our families, especially our seniors. That increased utilization and engagement will help our community understand what I already believe: Our libraries are a NEED TO HAVE, not a nice to have. We must fund them accordingly.

In your opinion, what is the role of the Dallas Public Library?

The role of the Dallas Public Library, in my opinion, is to be an accessible repository of knowledge for all people in Dallas and a resource for pursuing and achieving intellectual, professional, and economic opportunities of your choice. Whether you need a safe space to study, learn, check email, or apply for jobs, the Dallas Public Library is for you.

Additional Comments

As a Dallas ISD Trustee for the past 6 years and an engaged PTA parent of Dallas ISD students before that, I am uniquely aware of the importance of the Dallas Public Library system. It is absolutely essential and is a critical component of the educational ecosystem here in Dallas. We must fund it accordingly and make sure it is accessible and available for all who seek it. We have the ability to make better use of our facilities. I can commit to hosting some of my community meetings there to bring more engagement and awareness to our libraries.