

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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DECEMBER 10, 2014
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COSTA CONSTANTINIDES
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Andy L. King
Costa G. Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
Helen K. Rosenthal

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jonathan Bowles, Executive Director
Center for an Urban Future

David Giles, Research Director
Center for an Urban Future

Bridget Quinn-Carey
Interim President and CEO
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Linda Johnson, President and CEO
Brooklyn Public Library

Tony Marx, President and CEO
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Nefertiti Matos
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Chancey Fleet
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Andrew Heiskell Branch Library

Barry Schramos, Patron
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Charles Warren
Community to Save the New York Public Library

Veronica Conant
Community to Save the New York Public Library

Ramon Acevedo, Chairman
Sunset Park Education Coalition

Michael White
Citizens Defending Libraries

Elizabeth Brown
C. M. Pyle
Yuki Endo
Jacob Morris

[sound check]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now for the record, good afternoon. My name is Jimmy Van Bramer, and I'm very proud to be the Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. To my left, I'm thrilled to be joined by my great friend and the Chair of our Library Subcommittee, Costa Constantinides. To his left is our Finance Chair Julissa Ferreras, also a member of this committee and to her left is Council Member Peter Koo, a member of our committee also from Queens. First of all, I just want to say it's trilling to look out into the audience and see so many people here for this very important hearing about our libraries, and about the amazing and really important report that CUF prepared. And I want to start by saying thank you to Jonathan and David and this organization for dedicating so much time, and so many resources to something that I've always believed, and I think everyone in this room believes, is among the most important institutions in the City of New York, our public libraries. And to have CUF preparing these reports, and shedding light on the state of libraries today really amplifies all of the

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2 voices in this room, as we all make sure that
3 libraries have all the resources that they need.

4 So, I want to say that this hearing is
5 about this report, *Re-Visioning New York's Branch*
6 *Libraries*. And while we'll certainly touch on, and
7 some folks at the library systems may want to talk a
8 little bit about the Ten-Year Capital Plan. That's
9 not the primary focus of this hearing. We will
10 reconvene in January with the Finance Committee to
11 talk about that particular plan, which obviously is
12 important to all of us and the City of New York. But
13 we really want to talk about this report and its
14 findings. What it means about libraries. Our state
15 of libraries, and what I think many of us in this
16 room believe, which is we have to come to a better
17 fundamental and systemic way to fund our libraries.
18 Going year by year, piece by piece, member item by
19 member item is not the way to build a sustainable
20 future for our public libraries. And we have 214 or
21 so libraries throughout the City of New York. And
22 every single one of them, if you went to them right
23 now would have young people, new Americans,
24 immigrants from all over the world, seniors, people
25 who are unemployed, people who are looking for job.

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2 And in every single one of those 214 libraries in the
3 City of New York, lives are changing for the better.

4 And our public libraries have always been the first
5 place that people go. But they need the resources to
6 be able to do that work. I've always said, and I
7 think everyone here would agree, the library is
8 great. The books, the materials, the technology is
9 great. But if the roof is leaking, you can't have
10 all of those great things in that library, and you
11 can offer all those great programs. I have seen
12 library community meeting rooms where there were
13 leaking coming through the ceiling. I did a
14 memorable event many years ago with some elected
15 officials at that library. And, we all have so many
16 stories and so many things that we know libraries
17 need. It's really important that we talk about those
18 things, and talk about how we can make libraries
19 better.

20 So I look forward to hearing all the
21 testimony from CUF about their report, our library
22 systems, and all of the library advocates. And I see
23 a lot of folks wearing buttons from the various
24 library systems. So I want to thank all of the
25 library advocates for being here today, and for

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2 coming to City Hall. This is your City Hall, and it
3 is so exciting for me to see this place filled with
4 people who love libraries, who want libraries to
5 receive [applause and cheers] for funding.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet please. Settle
7 down.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And because we
9 have a ban on clapping in City Hall [laughter], I was
10 just about to say if you agree with me raise your
11 hand. So if you agree that libraries need more
12 money, raise your hand. [Cheers] Great. [laughs]
13 You're really not allowed to shout, but you can do
14 this if you do agree with me. So thank you for that
15 validation. Really, all of us have to raise our
16 voices very, very loudly this year if we're going to
17 get the result that we need in June both on the
18 expense side and the capital side obviously. We're
19 gong to focus a little bit more today on the capital
20 side, and the capital needs of libraries. So, thank
21 you for being here. I want to recognize our Counsel
22 the Committee Aminta Kilawan, who is amazing, and my
23 staff Matt Wallace, my Chief of Staff who is about to
24 take a phone call, and my Legislative Director Cody
25 Reiter, who is here as well. And with that, I'll

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2 turn it over to my Co-Chair also from Queens because
3 we love our libraries all over the City of New York,
4 Council Member Costa Constantinides.

5 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,
6 Chairman Van Bramer, and thank you for your strong
7 advocacy for every single library in New York City
8 making it a better--a bigger and better place for
9 everyone. So thank you. And it's kind of very
10 special to chair this committee with Council Member
11 Van Bramer. We're two boys from Astoria who grew up
12 in the libraries in our community and doing our
13 homework there, and understanding as we grew up, the
14 importance of libraries in our lives together. We
15 never even knew each other.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
17 That's right.

18 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: We just
19 shared sort of--

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
21 We can do our homework together today.

22 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: We can do
23 our homework together, right. [laughs]

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: A different
25 situation.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: But, you
3 know, having that sort of shared passion for the
4 libraries is a great thing. That's in Queens. All
5 over the city of special importance. Good afternoon.
6 I am Costa Constantinides, Chair of the Subcommittee
7 on Libraries. Thank you all for coming to this
8 important hearing on capital needs and planning for
9 our libraries. The three library systems operate 214
10 local library branches throughout the city, and four
11 research library centers in Manhattan. As we're all
12 aware, libraries are not just a repository for books,
13 but they provide invaluable programs and services to
14 our neighborhoods and communities throughout our
15 city.

16 In 2013, branch libraries greeted 36
17 million visitors or approximately 160,000 every day.
18 Libraries circulated 61 million materials citywide
19 and enrolled 2.4 million people in their public
20 programs. The Center for An Urban Future recently
21 released a report entitled *Re-Visioning New York's*
22 *Branch Libraries*, which found that 178 branches or
23 86% of all New York library locations faced an
24 estimated \$1.1 billion in capital needs. While this
25 usage of the city's three library branches has

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2 increased, the library systems are struggling to keep
3 up with many of their older branches in the state of
4 good repair. The average branch library in New York
5 City is 61 years old, and 52 of the library branches
6 are at least 100 years old. As the Chair of the
7 Subcommittee on Libraries, this is a matter of great
8 concern to me. Libraries need to be properly
9 maintained in order to continue to provide the
10 outstanding services to all New Yorkers to meet the
11 growing and changing needs of their patrons.

12 Today, I look forward to hearing from the
13 library system regarding how they plan on addressing
14 some of the challenges they currently face. To learn
15 more about the findings and recommendations from the
16 Center for An Urban Future, and to explore what we
17 can do--what can be done to provide greater support
18 to our libraries so that they can operate at optimal
19 capacity. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
21 much, Council Member Constantinides, and while I am
22 very proud to be a kid from Astoria and I got my
23 first library card at the Broadway branch, and you
24 probably had a different library.

25 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Steinway.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: At the Steinway
3 branch. We are equally in love, might I say, with
4 all the libraries in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten
5 Island and the Bronx. They are all of our libraries.
6 So with that, I want to ask Jonathan Bowles and David
7 Giles from the Center for an Urban Future to come
8 forward. And probably everyone has seen this report.
9 I hope everyone has seen this report. It is the
10 second in apparently a series of reports prepared by
11 the Center for an Urban Future Center, and again, I
12 really want to thank the Board, and the Board Chair
13 of Center for an Urban Future, who just happens to be
14 former Speaker Gifford Miller at this point. But
15 this organization has really taken to libraries. And
16 we are grateful, those of us who care about
17 libraries, to have such an important organization
18 fighting for libraries, thinking about libraries.
19 Really digging down deep, and talking about how we
20 can build better libraries, sustain libraries, plan
21 for the future, meet the needs of people who are in
22 libraries today, but also going to be in libraries in
23 the future. So thank you Jonathan and David, and I
24 think David is going to lead the testimony? Jonathan
25 is going to say a few words first?

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JONATHAN BOWLES: I'll start.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: However you both
do it, thank you both for being here.

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JONATHAN BOWLES: Well, thank you,
Chairman Van Bramer and Councilman Constantinides.
David and I area also Queens residents right now. So
we just wanted to mention that. But thanks so much
for binging us all together on an important topic
that we all obviously feel very strongly about. I'm
just going to talk for a quick second to say that,
you know, we're not a library advocacy organization.
We publish reports about a range of issues that are
important to this city. Just last week we published
a report about part-time community college students,
and the challenges they are having getting access to
tuition assistance. We write about the tech sector.
We write about immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurs
in this city. But in so many of the things that we
were researching about New York City over the years,
we kept coming back to one institution that was just
so important whether it's serving seniors,
immigrants, disconnected youth, the unemployed, free-
lancers. So many different things, and the libraries
were really at the heart of serving these

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2 populations. And, you know, we just find libraries
3 so well positioned to help New York address many of
4 the biggest challenges and opportunities facing this
5 city. And I think that's why we did our first
6 report, a couple of years ago called *Branches of*
7 *Opportunity*, and this most recent report, *Re-*
8 *Envisioning New York Branch Libraries*. And David
9 Giles is the Researcher, the primary researcher and
10 author of both of those reports, and I'm going to let
11 him take it from here.

12 DAVID GILES: Thank you, and with that,
13 I'm just going to delve into the report's major
14 findings and recommendations. I'm excited to speak
15 to you today about one the city's most important and
16 underappreciated public institutions. At a time when
17 New York's elderly population is one of its fastest
18 growing demographics, youth unemployment is higher
19 than it's been in decades, and almost everybody is
20 looking to upgrade their skills in an economy that
21 values technology and English literacy above all
22 else, community libraries have an important and
23 unique role to play. With 207 branches across the
24 five boroughs, almost everybody is in walking
25 distance of one. And with new and expanded

1 educational programs, attendance is at an all-time
2 high, growing 62% over the last ten years. In 2013,
3 branch libraries greeted 36 million visitors or
4 approximately 160,000 every day they were open. But
5 New York's three public library systems have
6 struggled to keep their buildings in a state of good
7 repair, much less up-to-date and meeting the space
8 and technology demands of today's users.

10 In a recent report, the Center for an
11 Urban Future documented \$1.1 billion in capital needs
12 across 178 branches or 86% of all library locations.
13 59 branches across the city have at least \$5 million
14 in basic repair needs. The most common state-of-
15 good-repair problems involve malfunctioning
16 mechanical equipment, leaky roofs, overburdened
17 electrical distribution systems, and a lack of
18 accessibility for the elderly and physically
19 disabled. In all, 64 branches across the city needs
20 HVAC repairs or replacements; 55 need roof repairs;
21 55 need to be made ADA compliant; 35 need boiler
22 repairs or replacements; 32 need electrical system
23 upgrades; and 23 need new elevators.

24 Reconfiguring layouts and adding basic
25 service amenities to meet modern usage patterns and

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2 needs is another widespread problem. Far too many
3 branches struggle to provide enough space for people
4 to sit down and plug in their laptops and other
5 mobile devices, for example. Out of the 45 branches
6 we visited for our site surveys, 58% or 26 locations
7 have plugs for just ten devices or fewer, and 18% or
8 eight locations have plugs for just one or none at
9 all. In some cases, even very popular branches had a
10 dearth of electrical outlets for patrons working on
11 their own devices. In the McKinley Park Branch in
12 Southern Brooklyn, which ranks in the top ten
13 citywide in both circulation and visits, doesn't have
14 a single place for patrons to plug in. In Queens,
15 the popular Jackson Heights branch can accommodate
16 only three devices at one time, and all of those are
17 outlets that are clustered in just one corner of the
18 library.

19 Yet, another thing most libraries are
20 struggling to provide is sufficient space for on-site
21 activities, including seating at desks, and
22 physically separated rooms for classes and workshops.
23 In our survey of over 300 New York City librarians
24 not being to accommodate on-site activities
25 registered time and again as a top complaint.

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2 Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that
3 their community rooms were insufficient to meet
4 patron needs. Seventy-four percent said they lacked
5 sufficient space to ensure a quiet working
6 environment, and 60% said their branch struggled to
7 support people who wanted to work in groups.

8 New York's Capital Funding Process is
9 largely to blame for this state of affairs. Unlike
10 most other agencies, libraries don't receive a
11 guaranteed capital budget to make systematic repairs,
12 but instead raise funds from individual elected
13 officials on a year-by-year and project-by-project
14 basis. And at least 60% of the libraries' total
15 capital budget comes from individual city council
16 members and borough presidents through the
17 discretionary funding process. The average for city
18 agencies is just six percent. Because discretionary
19 dollars are limited, the libraries have to piece
20 together their funds from a wide variety of different
21 sources. And they often have to break up projects
22 into smaller, more manageable parts in order to get
23 the construction and repair process underway.

24 More than three-quarters of the branches
25 that have received capital upgrades since 2010, still

1 have major repair needs that have gone unaddressed.
2 Sixty-four percent of those branches have needs
3 totaling \$1 million or more. Doing everything in
4 this piecemeal way makes it difficult to do long-term
5 planning since so much of the libraries' planning
6 capacity is geared toward raising funds for projects
7 and figuring out how they can be stretched because of
8 their needs.
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10 In Re-Envisioning New York's Branch
11 Libraries, we at CUF recommended that City Council
12 and the Administration work together to repair, and
13 improve this process. Several important action items
14 include the following:

15 Increase administration capital funding
16 for the city's libraries so that they don't rely on
17 the discretionary funding process to the extent that
18 they do now.

19 Increase lump sum appropriations to allow
20 the libraries to make repairs across the system
21 rather than building by building and project by
22 project.

23 Revisit capital eligibility requirements
24 for libraries that place an undue burden on the
25 capital planning and construction process, and aren't

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2 necessary for ensuring the financial integrity of
3 this city's capital fund.

4 Streamline the procurement and
5 contracting process so that VDC and the libraries can
6 make capital improvements in a more timely, cost-
7 effective manner.

8 Create a Director of Libraries inside of
9 City Hall to help oversee library investments, and
10 align those investments with city policy priorities.

11 However, with the city's libraries, one
12 opportunity stands above the rest. As discussed in
13 our report, there would be enormous benefits to
14 creating a true long-term capital plan for the
15 libraries. With a firm financial commitment from the
16 Administration and perhaps also City Council, the
17 libraries could raise additional funds from
18 philanthropy, as the Seattle Public Library did in
19 the late 1990s when it launched a capital campaign to
20 rebuild every library in the city. On the basis of
21 \$200 million government bond, the Seattle Public
22 Library was able to raise 30% in additional funding
23 from private sources. That's \$60 million in Seattle.
24 Moreover, a long-term capital plan would allow the
25 city to better align library investments with

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2 important city policy priorities including the de
3 Blasio's Administration's ambitious new housing,
4 resilience, and workforce development initiatives.

5 Like schools, library investments should
6 factor prominently in city up-zonings, and accompany
7 major new housing developments that increase
8 neighborhood density and put stress on vital
9 community services. They should also figure
10 prominently in the city's resilience and storm
11 preparedness plans. After Super Storm Sandy,
12 libraries in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island
13 played important roles in recovery as residents came
14 to the libraries to charge their phones, share
15 information, and retrieve blankets and food. And as
16 Red Cross workers came to print out maps, and plan
17 their house-to-house checks.

18 But the libraries in these communities
19 were also severely damaged, and their role in the
20 recovery dramatically hampered. Investments that
21 were a part of a long-term plan would better position
22 these vital community assets to serve both residents
23 and first responders in case of another storm. And
24 given the sheer number of libraries in our New York

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2 City Evacuation Zones, this should be a priority for
3 officials at all levels of government.

4 According to a recent analysis using
5 Library and Office of Emergency Management data, 74
6 different branches are located within New York City
7 Evacuation Zones including 12 inside Zone 1.
8 Meanwhile, 75 additional branches are within a half-
9 mile walk of the Evacuation Zones. Together, these
10 149 branches have over \$600 million in capital needs.
11 Now, is the time for the City to think ambitiously
12 about its libraries and reverse decades of neglect.
13 The de Blasio Administration's recent accomplishments
14 in Pre-K expansion and park equity, and its ambitious
15 goals with respect to affordable housing and
16 workforce development show that it is serious about
17 quality neighborhoods, affordability and skills
18 development for those New Yorkers who have fallen
19 behind in today's knowledge economy. A bold new plan
20 to reinvigorate the City's branch libraries would
21 strengthen these efforts even more. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much, David and Jonathan for all your work. And
24 obviously the Seattle public is often talked about as
25 an example of what can be done. No two cities are

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2 alike. No situation is alike. That is essentially a
3 Central Library for the City of Seattle, and we have
4 our central libraries in the boroughs. But most of
5 what we're talking about is smaller neighborhood
6 branch libraries. But I wonder if the route of bonds
7 and that measure in terms of raising significant
8 capital if you've looked at that from the perspective
9 of New York City. It's been talked about a number of
10 times, and it is a piece to this. But have you
11 studied that?

12 DAVID GILES: Have I studied how the
13 bonding would work in New York City?

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

15 DAVID GILES: Yeah, well--

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
17 For the libraries.

18 DAVID GILES: The entire capital budget
19 is more or less blended together and bonded out in
20 various ways. And so, I think it's simpler in some
21 ways in New York City than it was in Seattle. The
22 city could just decide to start funding the
23 libraries, and approve the projects that are bondable
24 in the city's capital fund. And just decided to do
25 it, I think. I think, however, that the Seattle

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2 example, the lesson there is that the city made a
3 firm commitment over a period of time that the
4 libraries being non-profits it had the opportunity to
5 create a capital campaign. It wouldn't just be a
6 plan, it would be a campaign that they could
7 fundraise off of.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I'm going to
9 ask you that question on purpose because as I said to
10 my colleague and Co-Chair here, if the will is there
11 we can do it. We can make this happen, and that
12 needs to come from everybody involved. I wanted to
13 also talk to you about process because I'm sure
14 you've studied how we do capital in terms of the
15 speed, the design, the construction. And if you have
16 recommendations there, and what have you all come up
17 with?

18 DAVID GILES: The process is incredibly
19 complicated. I have I don't know how many dozens of
20 conversations with the capital planning people at the
21 libraries just trying to wrap my head around it. So
22 I'll give it my best shot. Yes, there are multiple
23 agencies involved, OMB, Office and Management and
24 Budget is sort of at the center. And there are lots
25 of hoops and hurdles, and for good reason, in

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2 approving capital projects. I do think the process
3 could be streamlined, and it could work much faster
4 if all the different player worked together and made
5 that a priority. I think Cultural Affairs has done a
6 better job of doing that for projects on the cultural
7 side than the libraries have managed to do on the
8 library side. So there might be a model there. I do
9 think that the capital eligibility process is onerous
10 on the libraries, and I think it's worth considering
11 whether or not the Controller's Directed 10
12 Guidelines could be revisited, and whether or not
13 there are rules governing what is capital eligible
14 and what not that could be reformulated to lessen the
15 burden on the construction and capital planning
16 process.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much. I want to recognize that we are being joined
19 by Council Member Laurie Cumbo, a member of our
20 committee from Brooklyn. So we get a Brooklyn shout
21 out after about 70 Queens shout outs. So that's
22 good. So you had mentioned, and I know that it was
23 mentioned at another hearing that we had several
24 months ago about the Department of Cultural Affairs,
25 and obviously we have a different structure. Barring

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2 having that structure in place for libraries, how--
3 are there any lessons to be learned from the
4 Department of Cultural Affairs, and how it manages
5 capital projects or funds capital projects?

6 DAVID GILES: I think there are a lot of
7 advantages in having independent non-profits run the
8 library systems. But I do think that in so far as
9 they are a step removed from the Administration,
10 there will always be problems. So I do think that
11 establishing somebody like a Director of Libraries
12 inside City Hall is a model that should be looked at
13 and strongly considered. I do think if the libraries
14 had someone inside City Hall who was party to the
15 budget process, party to the policy planning process
16 that it would benefit them. So, I guess that's my
17 best response.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure. I also
19 want to recognize Senator Montgomery is here, also
20 from Brooklyn. So thank you, Senator, for joining
21 us. And folks often talk about private fundraising,
22 and leveraging public dollars to raise more private.
23 To be sure, there are some terrific opportunities on
24 the capital side. There might be maybe opportunities
25 and some other ways to raise money, but it is--

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2 There is always going to be some equity issues there
3 in terms of the branches being so spread out in many,
4 many different neighborhoods. Some of those
5 neighborhoods may not have the same resources or the
6 same ability to raise money. Quite frankly, some of
7 the boroughs don't have the same abilities. So talk
8 to me a little bit about that piece, right. And how
9 do we (a) get over some of those hurdles, which
10 clearly exist. And how do we make that work, and
11 maybe the systems will have some thoughts on that as
12 well when they testify. But what's your sense of
13 that private and philanthropic potential on the
14 capital side that either that we're not realizing at
15 this point, or have not been able to generate?

16 DAVID GILES: I think private donors are
17 reluctant to give toward a system and a process that
18 is as dysfunctional as it is. So I think it hampers
19 private fundraising for capital to see how badly the
20 system is maintained by the city. I think if the
21 city were to make a big commitment to the libraries,
22 and signaled to philanthropists and others that they
23 wouldn't be just filling in a hole created by the
24 city that ironically they would be a lot more-- That
25 giving to the libraries would be a lot more

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2 desirable. So there's a sort of virtuous circle I
3 think that would occur if the city did, in fact, make
4 libraries a priority and signaled strongly that it
5 was willing to do so.

6 JONATHAN BOWLES: And let me just add
7 that, you know, David talked in great detail about
8 the maintenance needs of our branch libraries, and
9 they're significant. And I think when we talk about
10 more capital funding needed from city government,
11 there's a lot to do just to bring everything into a
12 state of good repair. But, you know, we didn't even
13 really start talking about the aspirational needs of
14 our branch libraries. Bringing them into the 21st
15 Century, taking advantage of making them better
16 configured for how people are using libraries today,
17 investing in technology. And I these are some of the
18 things that philanthropic foundations and other
19 individuals I think would be interested in doing in
20 making those kind of commitments if there was a
21 foundational commitment from government to take care
22 of the boilers and leaky roofs and those kinds of
23 things.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I couldn't agree
25 more, and I know my colleagues have some questions.

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2 But, you know, as someone who loves libraries and
3 allocates capital funding to the libraries in my
4 district every year. But there are some real
5 constraints in terms of what we have, in terms of our
6 ability to allocate. So I just want to say that I
7 agree that we need more, and we definitely need
8 libraries to be very meaningfully included in the
9 Ten-Year Capital Plan. And for there to be
10 significant investment in our libraries. So that we
11 can get beyond the repair and maintenance issues, and
12 get to a place of really truly re-envisioning all of
13 our libraries work. I know the capital teams of all
14 of our systems here that's what they do everyday,
15 right? They spend all day trying to figure out how
16 to make the libraries better and more attractive, and
17 easier to navigate. And I know that work is going
18 on, and we just need to make sure that the roofs
19 don't leak, and the windows and the doors work. And
20 the tiles don't fall, and all of those things don't
21 happen. And if we can make sure that those things
22 aren't happening, when we get to a place where, in
23 this glorious place where we're talking about
24 expansions and new libraries, and additions. And
25 really changing the way that they look and function,

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2 and I think that's very exciting. So, thank you
3 again for the report. I will pass it over to my Co-
4 Chair, but I want to first recognize Council Member
5 Helen Rosenthal from Manhattan, a member of our
6 committee as well. So Chair Constantinides.

7 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you,
8 Chairman Van Bramer. Thank you for your comments and
9 your leadership. You touched on a few things here
10 that sort of resonated with me. We talked about sort
11 of looking at this sort of as part of a larger
12 picture. When we're building, we sort of strive to
13 build 200,000 units of affordable housing in New York
14 City. We just went through a sort of large
15 development in Astoria, and the Astoria Cove. And as
16 part of--much to Mayor de Blasio's credit, he
17 recognized with this body the importance of putting
18 additional dollars into libraries. That this was
19 going to be in addition to this large development we
20 need to put into the infrastructure in our
21 neighborhood and part of our essential infrastructure
22 in our neighborhoods are libraries. In your report,
23 how did you feel we did that prior with sort of
24 considering libraries as part of the city. [sic]
25 Looking back a little bit, how did we do that before?

1
2 Were libraries a strong consideration when we did re-
3 zonings, or how can we do better looking forward into
4 the future?

5 DAVID GILES: I think that's right.

6 Yeah, I think in the past the libraries weren't
7 really a part of the conversation when it came to
8 planning issues like up-zonings or major developments
9 requiring ULURP approval. Schools were always a part
10 of that discussion for good reason. But I do think
11 libraries, you know, were a local institution, and
12 didn't have the visibility they needed at the
13 citywide level. And weren't recognized by the City
14 Planning and other agencies, and other bodies as a
15 vital resource that they are. And so, I think that's
16 terrific that in that Astoria Cove process that the
17 library was recognized as a vital community resource
18 deserving of funding.

19 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I think we
20 have to do more of that moving forward, and I think
21 that--

22 DAVID GILES: [interposing] Yes,
23 absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: --we need to
25 ensure that if we build our city out that we have

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2 increased development and responsible development.
3 That part of that responsible process is including
4 our libraries into those conversations to ensure that
5 they get upgrades when necessary to deal with the
6 growth in population. Ensure that the population
7 that's going to be--it's really there is getting
8 these vital resources that they need on a consistent-
9 -a consistent basis. You also touched upon
10 resiliency. As I look at 214 library branches, and
11 see 214 opportunities for emission neutral buildings
12 in New York City as we can do solar panels, do
13 different types of greening initiatives without
14 libraries. But I also see a problem with charging
15 our libraries with that sort of challenge when we're
16 there struggling to get the capital needs to keep the
17 lights on and keep the roof from leaking on our
18 patrons. So how do you folks see what libraries
19 could be as part of--make our city--reduce our
20 emissions 80 by '50--80 by 2050?

21 JONATHAN BOWLES: I'm going to let David
22 go into this in more detail, but I wanted to start by
23 saying that with your previous question about how
24 have libraries previously been thought of in this
25 kind of planning. And as far as resiliency planning,

1
2 one thing that I was really struck by in David's
3 research was that I think in the major city report
4 that was done about storm preparedness and
5 resiliency. I don't know a 200 plus page report
6 laying out how to prevent or prepare for the next
7 super storm. I don't think there as a single mention
8 of the word libraries. And we know how many people
9 went to their local branch. After the storm it was a
10 place to go, and certainly it should be in thinking
11 going forward. And so, I wanted to quickly say we
12 need to change how we think about libraries, and part
13 of this housing development or community development,
14 part of it is resiliency. David.

15 DAVID GILES: Regarding the energy use
16 and efficiency questions, solar panels I think it is
17 worth pointing out that when you have the poorest
18 buildings, you are operating a very inefficient
19 building wasting energy, costing the libraries a lot
20 in terms of operating in the city in terms of
21 emissions. So I think by securing and investing in
22 these spaces, making them more functional you would,
23 in fact, create benefits in terms of efficiency and
24 emissions for sure.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I think
3 definitely libraries can play a strong role, if you
4 look at every city-owned buildings to reduce our
5 emissions. But we have to ensure we get the capital
6 dollars just to keep the roof from leaking, but make
7 them--integrate them into that plan. And lastly,
8 we've talked a lot about the digital divide, and how
9 we take--how loudly the vital role that libraries
10 play in neighborhoods. I know that for me I have one
11 of the more isolated pockets of poverty in Queens,
12 the Astoria Houses. And there is only 41% of
13 residents there have access to the Internet at their
14 homes. I look at the library as key opportunity to
15 enhance that, and I think that is a-- It's not just
16 in Astoria House. It's throughout our city. So, how
17 do we--how do we sort of envision digital divide, and
18 I think I've asked the libraries that, what do you
19 think your recommendations would be how we can sort
20 of move to close that digital divide through making
21 our libraries better?

22 DAVID GILES: I think the libraries work
23 very hard on closing that digital divide, and I think
24 there have been a number of really innovative
25 programs recently that I hope will have a big affect

1
2 on that. I think there are 2.9 million people in New
3 York City by some estimates who don't have broadband
4 access at home. That's a huge population. And the
5 library I think is the go-to place for most of those
6 people. Regarding funding for technology and
7 Internet access in the libraries, my recommendation
8 would be to make it a part of the negotiations around
9 the operating budget. The libraries do use capital
10 dollars for some technology needs including laptop--
11 Not laptop computers, but desktop computers. But
12 much of what they do is not eligible sort of for
13 capital funds. Laptops, Cloud systems, WiFi that
14 comes out of the operating budget. And, I think it
15 needs to be a part of the discussion around the
16 operating budget that they are playing a major role
17 in closing the digital divide, and need extra funds
18 to do that.

19 JONATHAN BOWLES: And let me just also
20 add that it's not just that people are going to
21 libraries to access a computer and get a broadband
22 connection. I think it's so critical to understand
23 that this is how people are applying for jobs today.
24 We were told multiple times by some of the Workforce1
25 centers across the city that something like 90% of

1
2 all the jobs out there today, even retail jobs,
3 restaurant jobs you need to apply online. And if you
4 don't have an Internet connection or a high-speed
5 Internet connection at home, if you don't have a
6 computer at home, where are you going to go? A lot
7 of people are going to libraries just to apply for a
8 job.

9 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I definitely
10 want to commend the library systems for their work.
11 Again, whether it's the Hotspots, whether it's the
12 Google Tablets that have been recently lent out, they
13 are definitely moving in that strong direction. We
14 need to do better, and I think much like SCA, we have
15 technology that's capital eligible through out
16 capital dollars here. That is something that we
17 could definitely consider in the future to help meet
18 those needs, and to help move our city forward. With
19 that, I'll turn it back over to Chair Van Bramer.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
21 much Chair Constantinides, and I want to recognize
22 that we've been joined by some more colleagues.
23 Council Member Steve Levin from Brooklyn, and Council
24 Member Andy King from the Bronx. I'm thrilled to
25 have everyone with us, and I want to before end this

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2 panel, and have the Three Systems come up and
3 testify, which I like because you guys have sort of
4 laid out the big picture. And the Three Systems are
5 going to come in and talk to us a little bit from
6 their perspective of where we're at and where we need
7 to go. But I want to say that the bottom line here
8 is that we need more funding for libraries' capital
9 needs. And we need a real commitment as we're joined
10 by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley also from our
11 committee whom I believe is chairing a committee in
12 the other room. So, we understand that she's having
13 a very, very busy afternoon, but we need more
14 funding, and we need for the City of New York to
15 really redouble its efforts to meaningful include
16 libraries in the Ten-Year Capital Plan. And I look
17 forward to having that discussion in January when we
18 reconvene on that very specific topic. Before I
19 allow you to depart, Council Member Steve Levin has
20 some questions.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you. Thank
22 you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both. I was able to
23 read your report. I found it very fascinating, and
24 interesting. I represent Downtown Brooklyn and the
25 site of the Brooklyn Heights branch of Brooklyn

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2 Public Library. I just want to get your--I want to
3 get your opinion on the matter of the, whether or not
4 that's kind of the way to address capital needs. As
5 you're aware, and I think you are aware of what the
6 capital needs are at that branch. There's an HVAC
7 system that's been non-functional for a few years.
8 It's led to service cutbacks, and it's steep price
9 tag for replacement of a new HVAC system. They have
10 to go through City Procurement, and the scale and
11 scope of it. And so, I just want to put out that
12 it's a new model that the Brooklyn Public Library is
13 proposing to address capital needs by doing this, you
14 know, selling of unused development rights as a means
15 to meet those capital needs within that specific
16 branch. And then other capital needs throughout the
17 system. I'm just curious if you could opine a little
18 bit. Because you've looked at these systems as a
19 whole, and systematically, if you could opine on
20 whether that's an appropriate way to move forward?

21 JONATHAN BOWLES: I'll start with that.

22 It's a valid and fair question, and a good one. You
23 know, I think that the Brooklyn Public Library system
24 would probably be irresponsible not to look at this
25 kind of an option. I mean I think you know that-- I

1
2 think it was 2013 they faced something like \$300
3 million in state-of-good-repair needs, and I believe
4 they got \$15 million that year. Maybe it's within \$5
5 million or so of that range, but obviously they're
6 not getting enough city funds to take care of their
7 significant capital needs. And I think our position
8 is that we've got to start with City capital dollars
9 need to increase. We need to kind of undertake a
10 long-range capital plan from this city with city
11 dollars to really think, you know, in the long range.
12 And think broadly about our libraries' needs, and
13 their place in communities, and it should start with
14 that. But I think given the extent of those capital
15 needs, and the fact that we're not even getting to
16 the aspirational needs of libraries. By all means we
17 should be taking in other options for renovating
18 branch libraries that have several million dollars in
19 capital needs or building new libraries. I think
20 what's exciting about what's happening in Brooklyn,
21 there are not that many branch libraries that have
22 that kind of development potential. But what they're
23 doing there is they're enabling the funding of lots
24 of other branch libraries across the borough that
25 don't have that development potential. And that

1
2 otherwise might not be getting that kind of capital
3 funding from the city or from the system. So, you
4 know, is this something that should be the first
5 option on the table? I don't think anybody believes
6 that, but this was in our report as one of the
7 recommendations that we should be doing. And I'll
8 let David elaborate or go further, but I think that
9 given the needs and where we are with funding, I
10 think they have to consider it.

11 DAVID GILES: Right. Yeah, I'd add to
12 that I think it's one tool. You know, it's not a
13 panacea. I think we need to see increased capital
14 dollars from the city in order to address serious
15 needs across the systems. And there aren't that many
16 of these examples. But I do think that it's a
17 workable model. I think the City Council and others,
18 the libraries should hold the developers' feet to the
19 fire to make sure that this executed in the best
20 possible way.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] It's
22 not a--it's not a done deal yet so it--

23 DAVID GILES: [interposing] Right. Sure.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And it has to go
25 through ULURP review. You know, I'm kind of weighing

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2 the issue here from my perspective as a council
3 member. It's not a done deal yet.

4 DAVID GILES: But I would say that in a
5 number of cases there are buildings that are maybe
6 not worthy of recreating as they were. A lot of them
7 are plainly too small to be a full service
8 neighborhood library. They were built during the
9 Lindsay years, and I credit Mayor Lindsay for
10 dramatically expanding the library system. But a lot
11 of those buildings were built with very poor
12 construction materials. The designs were very
13 slapdash, and not terribly successful. I'm not
14 convinced that a lot of the Lindsay boxes, the so-
15 called "Lindsay Boxes" should be rebuilt as they
16 were. Instead, I think in some cases we could look
17 at mixed-use developments as a root to expand and
18 improve the functioning of those buildings.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: If you look at the
20 Lindsay Era libraries, it's a different animal than
21 the Carnegie branches.

22 DAVID GILES: For sure. I don't know of
23 any Carnegie branches that I would recommend should
24 be torn down, and built as a mixed-use development.

1
2 These are 1970s, late '60s era buildings that are not
3 terribly successful as library locations.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: All right. Thank
5 you very much for your comments. Thank you, Mr.
6 Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much David and Jonathan. I don't know if you thought
9 you would become one of the preeminent library
10 experts in the City of New York when you took your
11 job at Center for an Urban Future, but you have
12 clearly become one. And I just want to say before
13 you leave, I think there is a lot of interest in this
14 hearing, both in the City Council and on the part of
15 the Administration. And I think that's really a good
16 thing, and I want to say that we have great partners
17 in the Mayor and in the Speaker and in the Council.
18 And I think working together all of us will get to a
19 good place here. But again, I want to thank you and
20 your organization because these studies produce these
21 hearings, which produce these conversations, and lead
22 us to a better place for libraries. And I am really
23 thrilled that you have done this.

24 So thank you very much, and with that, we
25 will call up the Three Library Systems, Tony Marx,

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2 President and CEO of the New York Public Library.
3 Linda Johnson, President and CEO of the Brooklyn
4 Public Library, and Bridget Quinn-Carey, Interim
5 President of the Queens Library. And you can choose
6 who goes first.

7 [Pause, background comments]

8 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Good afternoon.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon.

10 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Thank you for the
11 opportunity to be here today. I am Bridget Quinn-
12 Carey, Interim President and CEO of the Queens
13 Library. Before I begin my testimony, I want to
14 thank Speaker Mark-Viverito, Majority Leader Van
15 Bramer, Council Finance Chair Ferreras, Library
16 Subcommittee Chair Constantinides, Queens Delegation
17 Leader Weprin, and the entire City Council, which has
18 consistently supported the mission and program of the
19 Queens Library. We applaud your leadership. The
20 Queens Library also applauds the City's leadership in
21 turning a spotlight on the growing economic and
22 equities that stifle the potential for far too many
23 New Yorkers. Together with Mayor de Blasio, the City
24 Council has continually opened new doors of
25 opportunity to unleash that potential.

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2 Today, my colleagues and I come before
3 you representing the greatest equalizer for all New
4 Yorkers, our city's libraries. Together, we open
5 doors to provide the broadest range of services to
6 the broadest range of New Yorkers. Whether it's
7 teaching English to our new immigrant population,
8 providing after school services every day or
9 providing job assistance to unemployed New Yorkers,
10 there is a free program in the public library. And
11 we have had the biggest impact in helping to close
12 the great digital divide by opening the wonders of
13 the Internet to more New Yorkers than any other
14 institution. However, right now our libraries are
15 not able to give New Yorkers the full benefit of what
16 we have to offer. The lack of reliable capital
17 budget support has limited our ability to provide the
18 level of service we know is needed, and could deliver
19 if our basic capital needs were met in a way that
20 allows us to plan effectively.

21 We all know that emergency repairs cost
22 more than planned repairs, and that we are able to
23 give the taxpayers the best value when we have the
24 resources to make needed capital upgrades
25 strategically. The average branch library across the

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2 City is 61 years old, as identified in the CUF
3 Report, with a quarter of the branches built over a
4 century ago. They are heavily used. Collectively,
5 New York City's public libraries logged more than 35
6 million visits last year creating, as you can
7 imagine, a great deal of wear and tear. the vast
8 majority of libraries are poor configured to meet the
9 new demands on our libraries, and of the digital age
10 with too few electrical outlets, too little space for
11 classes, group work or space for individuals working
12 on laptops.

13 The Center for an Urban Future's Re-
14 Envisioning New York's Branch Libraries Report has
15 detailed the stifling effects of long-term
16 disinvestment in capital funding for branch
17 libraries. In the five boroughs, we have more than
18 \$1.1 billion in unmet basic capital needs. Between
19 Fiscal Year 2004 and 2013, the City spent \$503
20 million on capital improvements for the libraries.
21 During the same time period, city capital
22 expenditures for cultural institutions totaled \$2.1
23 billion, and capital funding for parks and
24 recreational facilities totaled \$4.4 billion. We
25

1
2 support those investments wholeheartedly, and seek to
3 have libraries on equal footing.

4 Currently our piecemeal year-to-year
5 funding requests must compete for local support
6 against a broad range of unique needs within each
7 Council district and borough. This approach does not
8 allow us to effectively plan restoration projects to
9 replace aging systems on a routine basis and to
10 assure continued public service. Majority Leader Van
11 Bramer has correctly noted that council member do not
12 have the allocations available to fund high cost
13 projects including total building renovations,
14 expansions, and new facilities. Those projects
15 should be within the purview of a comprehensive
16 strategic capital program.

17 Therefore, we are indebted to the Mayor
18 and the City Council for including libraries in the
19 City's Ten-Year Capital Budget Strategy. Each
20 library system has submitted plans that address
21 unique needs of our systems, and plans will bring
22 together-- Will bring libraries into a state of good
23 repair, create necessary spaces to provide full
24 service library programs, and support the goals of
25 quality, sustainability, resiliency and growth. It

1
2 should be noted that this plan is in parallel with
3 our internal capital plans. As an organization that
4 manages 65 locations, it's part of our day-to-day
5 operations to make sure that we are aware of the
6 needs of each building, and have a strategic long-
7 range capital plan to address those.

8 The plan from Queens built upon the
9 substantial capital projects we have recently
10 completed, including the new Glen Oaks Library; the
11 new Teen Center at Cambria Heights; and renovated
12 libraries at Bayside, Fresh Meadows, and Queens
13 Borough Hill. We also restored library facilities
14 damaged by Hurricane Sandy, including those in
15 Auburn, Broad Channel, Seaside and Howard Beach.
16 Peninsula is currently under construction and is
17 scheduled to reopen this spring.

18 Key projects underway include the brand
19 new Elmhurst Library, an expansion of the Kew Gardens
20 Hills Library. The full renovation of the Central
21 Library and the expansion of the Rochdale Village
22 Adult Learning Center. New library buildings at
23 Hunters Point in Far Rockaway are now in design.
24 Additional, upcoming projects include the full
25 renovation of the Glendale Library, expansion and

1
2 renovation of East Elmhurst, and interior renovations
3 of Richmond Hill and Woodhaven Libraries. Despite
4 our progress, which has been considerable, many unmet
5 capital improvement and maintenance needs remain
6 across the borough. These include critical
7 infrastructures such as roof replacements, elevators,
8 and ADA upgrades as well as expansions and
9 renovations, which many communities have long sought.

10 As the CUF Report notes, many of the
11 city's libraries are simply too small, and although
12 small buildings pose problems in every borough, 41 of
13 our 65 service locations in Queens are less than
14 10,000 square feet. It is impossible to squeeze full
15 service library programming classes and collections
16 into these spaces. Demands on and for library space
17 will continue to grow. The city projects that the
18 population of Queens will increase by more than
19 300,000 people by the Year 2030. Young people
20 represent a growing population with critical service
21 needs. And we know that we can best serve our teen
22 population when we give them their own space. For
23 example, in Cambria Heights we recently opened a
24 4,000 square foot teen center complete with a tech
25 lab, group study area, and a recording booth and that

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2 is drawing young people from all over the area to the
3 library. And, in fact, they are going to be
4 producing a CD here any day.

5 But not all of our libraries have room to
6 house such a state-of-the-art teen area. Areas in
7 Queens that have traditionally been industrial space
8 are now becoming residential, and creating--and that
9 creates obviously a need for new libraries in those
10 communities. And in order to serve both our existing
11 customers, and adequately handle the influx of new
12 residents, our existing infrastructure must grow
13 accordingly. That's why our ten-year capital
14 strategy goal is to ensure that every Queens Library
15 facility will be accessible, safe, technologically
16 advance, cost-effectively built and maintained,
17 flexible, and a good fit for the community served.

18 Over a ten-year period from 2016 to 2025,
19 Queens Library seeks to enhance and enrich its
20 library infrastructure by making capital improvements
21 to 60 of our library locations, allocating over \$418
22 million over the course of the plan. This will
23 require approximately \$41 million in capital funding
24 each year. These improvements will promote the
25 growth of our infrastructure and increase its equity,

1
2 resiliency, and sustainability. So that we can
3 fortify our existing buildings, and build new ones
4 with modern enhancements, incorporate energy
5 efficient materials, and green architecture, reduce
6 our energy use and greenhouse emissions. And increase
7 our institutional capacity to better serve our nearly
8 929,000 active borrowers, program attendees, and the
9 greater population of Queens.

10 Our plan includes two brand new libraries
11 in emerging communities, six replacement buildings,
12 indoor and outdoor renovations, new heating and
13 cooling systems, and other environmentally friendly
14 renovations. And expanding technological services
15 for our customers. We would spend an average of \$24
16 million a year on development of new facilities; \$17
17 million a year on necessary reconstruction and
18 ensuring a state of good repair; and \$25 million over
19 ten years for technology ideally. The plan is
20 directly influenced by the policies set forth by our
21 City's Administration and linked to the Mayor's
22 policy priorities of equity, growth, resiliency, and
23 sustainability.

24 To guarantee equity, our goal is to
25 ensure that Queens Library facilities provide equal

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2 access to innovatively designed libraries that meet
3 the unique needs of our boroughs' individual
4 communities. We will build new community libraries
5 at Hunter's Point and Willets Point that will provide
6 services and programs to residents in these emerging
7 and planned communities. The overburdened libraries
8 in the surrounding neighborhoods will then be able to
9 better serve their existing communities more
10 effectively and more efficiently. In addition, we
11 will replace five existing buildings to help meet the
12 demands for public service and to deliver full
13 service library programs to our diverse customer
14 base.

15 Queens Library served as a lifeline to
16 many of the communities affected by Hurricane Sandy.
17 The improvements we make to our infrastructure as
18 well as the new buildings we construct will take into
19 account the role that our city's libraries play in
20 times of disaster. Several of our renovations will
21 make our existing libraries in flood-prone regions
22 more resilient to extreme weather conditions. A
23 major part of our resiliency efforts will be ensuring
24 that all capital improvements are built with an eye
25 towards cost-effective maintenance.

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2 Energy efficiency and helping to
3 compensate for the effects of climate change are two
4 of the city's top priorities over the next ten years
5 and beyond. Queens Library has created its own
6 energy saving initiative, our Flip the Switch
7 Campaign funded by the Department of Citywide
8 Administrative Services Division of Energy
9 Management. The improvements to our infrastructure
10 during our capital plan will further help to achieve
11 the Mayor's Sustainability Initiatives. Renovation
12 and construction efforts will continue to utilize
13 sustainable architectural practices. For example,
14 the new doors and windows at our Woodside, Forest
15 Hills, and Howard Beach locations will be energy
16 efficient. Thirteen of our libraries will receive new
17 roofs, designed to reduce energy and heating loss
18 while they protect our valuable collections,
19 furnishings and equipment, and customers from the
20 elements.

21 We need to upgrade and install new
22 heating, ventilating and air conditioning units at
23 many of our libraries. At two of our largest
24 libraries, we are planning on innovative technologies
25 like a cooling tower and a building maintenance

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2 system to control and monitor mechanical and
3 electrical equipment increasing the building's energy
4 efficiency. As you can see, our accomplishments have
5 been man, and that is thanks to the support that we
6 have received from the City and the City Council and
7 the borough president. But so, too, are our needs.
8 Today, the Three Library Systems have the opportunity
9 to join with the Mayor and the City Council to create
10 a new model that addresses the legacy of unmet needs,
11 and ensures a capital program that will be
12 sustainable. Thank you to the Mayor and the City
13 Council for this forward thinking and forward looking
14 approach to address the libraries' capital needs. I
15 appreciate the opportunity to testify, and I look
16 forward to our continued work together.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I just want to
18 interject here and say we've been joined by Council
19 Member and Deputy Leader Brad Lander from Brooklyn,
20 which is great to have him here at our committee in a
21 cameo appearance. But we love the fact that Council
22 Member Lander is a really, really big and strong
23 supporter of libraries. And so, it's important to
24 have incredibly strong allies in this fight. I just
25 want to say, Bridget, publicly I think you're doing a

1
2 great job, and I think part of that is evidences by
3 the really great turnout from Queens Library
4 advocates who are in the room today. So I want to
5 thank Alex and Joanne, and Camille Barrett, who I see
6 in the audience who once worked in my department when
7 I worked at the Queens Library. I know that all of
8 the folks who are here in Queens speaking out, and
9 are here because they love libraries. And I really,
10 really am so thrilled to see this room packed to the
11 rafters with folks who love libraries. So thank you
12 for all that great work. And I also want to say that
13 listening to your testimony and then reading it I
14 started to get really excited about all the things
15 that you are proposing to do. And, you know, that's
16 exactly what we should be doing, right, is talking
17 about this long-term vision, this long-term planning
18 in a really, really well thought out and systematic
19 way. And it's so exciting to read all the things
20 that you would like to be able to do and will do.
21 And I'm sure the other two systems are going to have
22 some great ideas as well. But this is exciting, and
23 this is exactly what we should be doing as a city.
24 So I think we will now ask Linda Johnson from
25 Brooklyn Public Library to testify.

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you, Chairman Van
3 Bramer. Thank you to Speaker Mark-Viverito and Co-
4 Chair Constantinides, as well as the entire City
5 Council for your defense of the city's--of the city's
6 public libraries. It's my pleasure to testify today
7 on the immense capital construction needs facing our
8 libraries. Last night, Brooklyn Public Library
9 hosted its 11th Annual Power Up Awards, which granted
10 \$30,000 in seed money to aspiring Brooklyn-based
11 entrepreneurs. Institutions such as Bogota Latin
12 Bistro, Green Light Book Store, and Green in BKLYN,
13 as well as hundreds of other small businesses all
14 began in a Brooklyn library. This type of business
15 development programming as well as our Early
16 Childhood Literacy Programs, Adult Learning, and ESOL
17 classes, job readiness trainings, and tech literacy
18 workshops are in high demand. But to deliver these
19 services, we need reconfigured libraries containing
20 flexible spaces, meeting rooms, adequate seating,
21 current technology, and improvements as simple as
22 electrical outlets to plug in laptops and other
23 devices. All features lacking across the aging
24 infrastructure of Brooklyn libraries.

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2 At the same time, we are working to keep
3 our physical plant from crumbling after decades of
4 minimal investment. Recently, the Center for an
5 Urban Future issued a report Re-Envisioning New
6 York's Branch Libraries. The crux of this report is
7 that our libraries are not adequately suited for
8 today's New Yorkers work, learn, or even spend their
9 leisure time. There are 59 branches in Brooklyn, of
10 which 70% are over 50 years old, and 28% are over 100
11 years old. As I have previously stated to this
12 committee, Brooklyn's libraries require over \$300
13 million in unfunded capital renovations just to
14 return them to a good state of repair. Almost
15 everyone of our locations requires over a million
16 dollars in capital repairs, and over a quarter of our
17 branches have over \$5 million in outstanding needs.

18 Attached to my testimony is an appendix
19 of our capital needs broken down by branch with
20 Council Districts noted. Sadly, no district is
21 spared from Green Point to Coney Island and New Lots
22 to Red Hook. Despite the heroic work our staff
23 performs every day to inspire and enrich our
24 neighborhoods, our buildings are failing. The
25 severity of last winter cost the library over 500

1
2 hours in unplanned closures, 441 of which occurred in
3 January alone, as our aging boilers could not meet
4 the demands placed on them. Most alarmingly, our New
5 Lots Library, home to an important adult literacy
6 center, was shuttered for nearly two weeks in January
7 and February. Though the summer was relatively mild,
8 we struggled to keep HVAC systems running beyond
9 their useful life. Sunset Park, Red Hook, and Marcy
10 Libraries had air conditioner problems last summer
11 while Brooklyn Heights continues to operate with no
12 functioning HVAC in most of the building. The
13 problems extend to our branch's aging roof and
14 facades, as the new CUF report mentions. The staff
15 at Brighton Beach Library move a bank of computers
16 every time it rains to prevent water damage.

17 While the task of repairing heating and
18 cooling system and leaky roofs may sound daunting, we
19 could not stop at nearly bringing our branches to a
20 state of good repair. When the Council and
21 Administration increased Brooklyn Public Library's
22 expense allocation this fiscal year by \$2.8 million,
23 we were able to use the funding, as well as savings
24 from internal efficiencies to hire 27 staff members
25 and open libraries an additional 220 hours per week.

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2 We are extremely grateful to the Council for this
3 accomplishment. While it is tremendously exciting to
4 open our doors for longer hours, these doors often
5 lead to spaces, which fail to meet the needs of
6 patrons and frankly are uninspiring.

7 Each Brooklyn neighborhood has its own
8 character, but everyone of them places multiple
9 demands on limited branch space. Our libraries
10 require flexibility to meet these myriad needs. We
11 must be able to transform the branch throughout each
12 day to accommodate computers for job seekers, social
13 areas for older adults, rooms to host story times,
14 and spaces for community events. Eight of Brooklyn's
15 branches were designed in such a way that 40% or more
16 of their footprint accommodate back office functions,
17 areas that would be better used to serve the public.
18 Despite the appetite our patrons have for new
19 technology, over half our branches are unable to
20 accommodate more than ten people using electrical
21 outlets at the same time. Many of them have only a
22 handful of publicly accessible outlets, while three
23 branches have none.

24 Our staff members do the best they can
25 with this limited space from hosting programs in

1
2 storage rooms to using free space on shelves near
3 outlets as laptop desks. Our stakeholders deserve
4 better. We like the Center for an Urban Future and
5 others envision a solution. The first large-scale
6 investment since the 1960s to not only remedy the
7 library infrastructure, but to create modern and
8 flexible libraries that inspire and encourage our
9 patrons to reach higher.

10 All of us at Brooklyn Public Library,
11 especially our Board of Trustees, are thankful for
12 the increase in capital funds we received this year.
13 But the \$18 million we received from the Council,
14 Administration, and the Borough President will not
15 solve the magnitude of the problems we face. To this
16 end, we are pleased to submit to the Administration a
17 proposed ten-year capital plan of \$375 million to
18 modernize Brooklyn's libraries. The long-term
19 comprehensive investment in libraries we envision in
20 the plan would allow us to bring our libraries into
21 excellent condition, and stop the expensive and
22 inefficient technique of applying short-term fixes to
23 buildings with complex needs.

24 We recognize that we are asking for a
25 significantly higher level of investment over the

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2 next ten years than we have requested since the
3 1960s. We also take seriously our obligation to help
4 meet this challenge. We have begun looking for new
5 sources of funding, developing new models for
6 building libraries in conjunction with other uses.
7 And finding new partners to achieve financially
8 viable strategies to create new libraries. Right
9 now, Brooklyn is one of 13 applicants being
10 considered in the final round for grants by the
11 Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, a joint
12 program of the New York State Office of the Attorney-
13 General and Department of Environmental Conservation.
14 We are seeking \$5 million in grant funds to plan and
15 construct a new 6,500 square foot addition to the
16 overcrowded Greenpoint branch complementing planned
17 capital repairs. We will add a second floor, which
18 will house the Greenpoint Environmental Education
19 Center, increasing public space by more than 80%.
20 And providing Greenpoint with a hub for environmental
21 programs, information, and library collections as
22 well as records of local environmental organizations.
23 With this new center residents of Greenpoint will be
24 able to attend seminars, forums, and events to become
25 personally involved in the environmental projects and

1
2 the initiatives of our city. This project is an
3 example of the type of creative funding sources. We
4 are seeking to create a better suited library and
5 structures and services far greater than we could
6 achieve with the current level of city funding we
7 received.

8 Working with the Economic Development
9 Corporation, Brooklyn Public Library is planning to
10 build a new library in Brooklyn Heights. And in so
11 doing, generating resources for branches across the
12 borough. This fall, we selected Hudson Companies as
13 our development partner for the new Brooklyn Heights
14 Library, a project we expect will generate more than
15 \$40 million to repair Brooklyn Public Library
16 branches with urgent capital needs. It will create
17 114 affordable housing units, and give the residents
18 of Brooklyn Heights new state-of-the-art branches.
19 Which they will have a voice in creating at the same
20 location as the current Brooklyn Heights branch. The
21 new library will be one of the largest in the system,
22 and will be part of a mixed-use building at the site
23 of the current branch. Beginning in 2015, Brooklyn
24 Public Library will conduct workshops seeking
25 community input for the design of the new library.

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2 Hudson Companies has entered into an
3 agreement to rent a temporary site on the library's
4 behalf just blocks away from the existing library to
5 ensure uninterrupted library service throughout the
6 construction period. A portion of the funds
7 generated by this project have already been earmarked
8 for three of our beautiful but crumbling Carnegie
9 branches. Walt Whitman, which will receive \$6
10 million for upgraded infrastructure and branch
11 modernization. Washington Irving, which will receive
12 \$4 million for upgraded infrastructure, and Pacific,
13 which will receive \$3.5 million for a new entry and
14 compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
15 With the funds generated by the Brooklyn Heights
16 project, we can finally begin to make the investment
17 in the century old architectural gems required to
18 meet the diverse needs of our patrons.

19 Our Sunset Park Library is another branch
20 in desperate need of repair. In addition to a new
21 roof and boiler, the branch needs an air conditioner
22 as its HVAC system failed this summer, and has been
23 temporarily replaced by loud portable chillers.
24 While the library consistently falls in BPL's top ten
25 branches for attendance and circulation, it has only

12 electrical outlets for the public. It lacks a
true children's area, and is only 12,200 square feet.
Between our partnership in Sunset Park with the
Department of Small Business Service Workshop
Center--Workforce Center and the requirements of our
ESOL conversation series, extensive programming for
youth and teens with special, technology, and with
tremendous demand from this bustling community, the
neighborhood has outgrown its library. Currently, we
have only \$2 million available to upgrade the
infrastructure and make modest interior repairs. But
these will not address the larger issues plaguing the
branching.

To build the library Sunset Park needs
and deserves, Brooklyn Public Library has proposed
partnering with the Department of Housing
Preservation and Development and the Fifth Avenue
Committee, a not-for-profit housing developer, to
redevelop the property with a library and 100%
affordable housing. The partnership proposes a new
two-story library of over 20,000 square feet with 50
units of affordable housing above it. The
collaboration will allow BPL to nearly double the
size of this library for the cost of fitting out the

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2 space. Much less than the price of building a larger
3 branch through a stand-alone project. Under the
4 current proposal, Fifth Avenue Committee will
5 purchase the development rights from the City of New
6 York, rebuild the core and shell of the larger
7 library as well as create the housing. And will
8 return of the new library branch to the city once
9 construction is complete.

10 As we go down this path, we are working
11 to fully understand this community's diverse needs
12 and desire. Whether seeking new sources of funding
13 or pursuing innovative redevelopment models, we are
14 trying to do our part to rise to this capital
15 challenge. The strategies, together with a large and
16 long-term investment by the City of New York would
17 finally allow the city's best human capital
18 development resource, our libraries, to fully
19 fulfill--to truly fulfill their missions.

20 I am pleased by the Council's focus on
21 this pressing issue, and growing recognition that we
22 must collectively rise to the challenge. I thank you
23 for the opportunity to testify today, and will be
24 happy to answer any questions.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much, Linda, and before we hear from Tony Marx at the
4 New York Public Library, I wanted to say a few
5 things. And then we're going to deviate from our
6 normal program because Council Member Cumbo has to go
7 and I didn't want to deny her the opportunity to ask
8 a question of Linda Johnson, if that would be all
9 right with our panelists. So we'll hear from Council
10 Member Cumbo now with respect to BPL.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so much,
12 Chair. I thank you for the interruption. I'm
13 actually co-chairing another hearing, and I'm sitting
14 on another hearing, and then this hearing. So there
15 is quite a bit going on today. I wanted to ask you
16 in terms of the \$40 million that is going to be
17 generated, I wanted to understand are there other
18 branches other than the three that you mentioned that
19 will be slated for \$40 million that's going to be
20 generated through the sale?

21 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, substantially more,
22 but at this point, we've only earmarked those three.
23 There will be close to \$30 million remaining, \$25 to
24 \$30 million remaining, and we will take a hard look
25 at the needs across the borough. And make sure that

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2 the money is invested in projects where we can attack
3 multiple conditions at the same time. Make sure that
4 the money is spread evenly over geographic--the
5 geography of the borough. And, of course, look at
6 where we can make the greatest impact.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think you
8 started in a good way by generating funds to go to
9 Walt Whitman. I think that was a good use of the
10 geography in that way. I wanted to know can you
11 expand a little bit more on the 114 units of
12 affordable housing in connection with this
13 collaboration. What will those 114 units look like?
14 Have you identified where they all will be located at
15 this time? And when will those I guess be projected
16 to go online, which is something that my constituents
17 have asked quite a bit about?

18 LINDA JOHNSON: All good questions.
19 First of all, the location of the affordable housing
20 has not been identified as yet. The developer is
21 working on securing the property, and has contractual
22 obligations to have that property purchased by the
23 time the project moves into ULURP. Secondly, the
24 units will come online at the same time that the
25 market rate units become available. So that there

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2 won't be a situation where the market rate units are
3 first on the market--first for sale, and then the
4 affordable housing. That's also a condition of the
5 agreement with the developer. And in terms of what
6 they look like, that's yet to be seen.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay, and when you
8 talk about again the Brooklyn Public Library, there
9 are 59 branches in Brooklyn, correct? And as was
10 asked in previous questions, are there other
11 libraries that are currently being looked at for a
12 variety of reasons in terms of a similar type of
13 situation that we're seeing with the downtown branch?
14 Are other libraries being looked at in a similar way
15 to create this new model that was asked about
16 previously?

17 LINDA JOHNSON: So, one of the things
18 that we've learned as we've looked across the borough
19 at where the opportunities like is that there is no
20 one-- there is no one model that's going to work
21 everywhere. There are different levels of intrinsic
22 value in the property. There are different levels of
23 need. And so, what we're trying to do is really not
24 approach this in any kind of cookie cutter fashion.
25 But rather, take a look at the problems in each--in

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2 each branch and try and figure out what the best
3 solution is, and the urgency of that solution.
4 Sunset Park, an example that I gave is busting at the
5 seams really. I mean it's a-- it's a wonderful thing
6 to see how well used that library is, and how
7 terrific the librarians in that branch are and what
8 they do with very little to work with. So it was
9 identified as an opportunity that was long overdue,
10 and that's one of the reasons it's at the top of our
11 priority list. But as we work through the list, we
12 will come up with the right solution in each case.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And finally, I
14 just wanted to ask one of the things as Chair of the
15 Women's Issues Committee but also as an African-
16 American woman, and certainly interested. I would be
17 very excited about this level of development and
18 growth that's happening as well as repairs and
19 renovations that are happening with our library
20 system to understand what will the MWBE commitment
21 be? Because in every area where resources are being
22 placed whether it's through private contributions or
23 through city and state and federal commitments.
24 Wanting to make sure that MWBE's are utilized. So
25 it's a comment, but also a question in terms of how

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2 active have those conversations been with the
3 renovations and repairs discussions, as well as
4 future development?

5 LINDA JOHNSON: I appreciate the question
6 and the comment. Yes, it's something that's a high
7 priority of ours, and something that we look at in
8 each of these projects.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. Well, we
10 certainly will be looking forward to utilizing those
11 particular companies and organizations that have been
12 left out of the growth and the development of
13 Brooklyn, New York and the City of New York as well.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much, Council Member Cumbo, and I know in Sunset Park
17 you've been working closely with Council Member
18 Menchaca, correct, on that plan. So without further
19 ado, the President and CEO of the New York Public
20 Library, Tony Marx.

21 TONY MARX: Thank you. Let me start by
22 thanking our Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Majority
23 Leader and Committee Chair, Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair
24 Cost Constantinides, and Chair Julissa Ferreras as

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2 well as the entire City Council for your strong
3 support of the New York City libraries.

4 More than a century ago, pioneering
5 partnership was formed between New York City, the
6 City's libraries and among the most generous
7 philanthropists our nation has known, Andrew
8 Carnegie. These partners had a simple yet ambitious
9 dream, to build a public library within walking
10 distance of every New Yorker. The dream was
11 realized, and generations of New Yorkers including
12 former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Supreme
13 Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, credit their
14 neighborhood library with improving their lives, and
15 making our city a beacon of opportunity.

16 Today, the New York Public Libraries 88
17 branches continue to offer access to books, but they
18 have also become proactive forces in their
19 communities providing expanded opportunities for
20 success from free WiFi, computer access, to job
21 search help, resume writing services, and so many
22 other educational programs. Yes, despite the public
23 libraries' ever more important role in keeping
24 neighborhoods strong, funding for libraries has not
25 kept up particularly for capital needs. As we heard

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2 from our colleagues at the Center for an Urban Future
3 to quote, "New York City's public libraries are
4 serving more people in more ways than ever before,
5 and have become an increasingly critical part of the
6 city's human capital system. But they have been
7 undervalued by policymakers."

8 I'm joined today by the Directors of each
9 of our branch networks, along with many branch
10 managers and other users of the libraries. Together,
11 these dedicated librarians of citizens are here to
12 attest to the essential role that our librarians--
13 that our libraries play, and to the dire capital
14 needs that many of our branches face. For our
15 capital projects there is no doubt that we have
16 benefitted from the great support from individual
17 council members, borough presidents, the Speaker and
18 the Mayor across our system's 92 locations. Over the
19 past ten years, with your support, we have completed
20 over 150 projects valued at over a quarter of a
21 billion dollars. Another \$354 million is currently
22 invested in ongoing branch capital projects across
23 our system. Thanks to your generosity, we have an
24 arrange of important projects underway, including a
25 major renovation of the Woodstock Library in the

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2 South Bronx; a second phase of renovations at the
3 Schaumberg Center in Harlem; and new library
4 buildings at Westchester Square in the Bronx,
5 Charleston on Staten Island, and Roosevelt Island.
6 We're also looking forward to our Midtown Campus
7 project, which will provide a much-needed renovation
8 to our largest circulating branch, the Mid-Manhattan
9 Library, which serves over 1.4 million New Yorkers a
10 year. The majority coming from the boroughs other
11 than Manhattan.

12 In all this, we are engaging the public
13 to ensure we create libraries that meet New Yorkers'
14 needs. We are convening community meetings,
15 conducting surveys, displaying signs to educate the
16 public on our plans and soliciting input. We
17 recognize it is more important than ever to work with
18 our communities to design the spaces, and develop the
19 programs that serve them. Despite this progress, far
20 more must be done to ensure that our critical
21 infrastructure needs are addressed. In addition to
22 the projects just described, we still face nearly
23 \$600 million in urgent capital needs across our
24 system. According to the CUF Report, taken together
25 with the City's two other library systems, this

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2 number rises to over \$1.1 billion. However, on
3 average the three systems receive approximately \$80
4 million in capital funding commitments each year from
5 all sources. To remedy this, we must work together
6 to establish a dedicated capital funding system that
7 allows for long-term planning. That allows for long-
8 term planning. The New York Public Library, the
9 average age of our libraries is 67 years old with
10 many branches dating back more than 100 years. And
11 each year, we must to go our elected officials to ask
12 for capital funding. Of course, you are great
13 partners in this work. But since this process is
14 based on the discretionary funding availability of
15 individual elected officials, decisions are not based
16 on an informed assessment of system wide priorities.
17 We do not have the opportunity to properly address
18 critical and ongoing infrastructure needs or to plan
19 ahead. With a stable stream of funding, we could
20 plan more effectively for our long-term needs, and at
21 NYPL, we can deliver these projects as pass-through
22 more cheaply and expeditiously. Supported by over a
23 decade of data, we are confident in our ability to
24 manage capital projects in a responsible, cost-
25 effective and timely manner. Ultimately realizing

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2 the greatest possible benefit to New Yorkers. There
3 is a tremendous opportunity for us to think more
4 creatively about how to manage and deliver on capital
5 projects. And we are eager to work with our partners
6 in City government, and with the public to explore
7 new solutions.

8 This fall the city's libraries were asked
9 to submit a ten-year capital plan to the city
10 outlining our needs for the next decade. We proposed
11 a three-tiered approach to investing in libraries:

12 1. Fully renovating branches or even
13 possibly replacing them in high need neighborhoods.

14 2. Create a critical maintenance needs
15 fund to catch up on decades of inadequate capital
16 investment, and

17 3. Establishing stable funding for a
18 targeted system wide technology upgrades in our
19 libraries.

20 We are committed to fully renovating or
21 replacing ten branches over the next ten years. Five
22 in the first five years of the plan, and five in the
23 second. Sites will be selected, and by an internal
24 review of branches in the highest need areas and
25 align with communities of interest for the city,

1 including in East Harlem, Hunts Point, and West New
2 Brighton [sic] in Staten Island. At Hunts Point,
3 which is in Tiffany Houston's network--Tiffany is
4 here--the dilapidated former custodian's apartment
5 awaits a renovation to become a vibrant community
6 space. Similarly, at Fort Washington Library in
7 Upper Manhattan, the network leader Sumi Oto, who is
8 here can tell you that the users need us to find the
9 funding to turn unused space on the third floor into
10 more public areas for more great programs. With
11 proper funding, we can begin design work on all five
12 projects immediately, and we would expect to break
13 ground on all five branches within 18 months.

15 The impact of capital investment on our
16 communities is immediate and powerful. Following a
17 recent major renovation of our Washington Heights
18 branch, for instance, we saw 107% increase in program
19 attendance; a 47% increase in visits; and a 45%
20 increase in circulation. Two more of our network
21 leaders, which is Al Dixon and Don Chance are also
22 here to let you know that similar dramatic boosts
23 were seen following recent renovations in Seward Park
24 and Chinatown and Kingsbridge in the Bronx. Other
25 communities, all communities deserve the same

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2 opportunities. To prioritize a plan for maintenance
3 spending, NYPL is understanding a new study of all
4 needs across our 88-branch networks paid for through
5 private funds. Following this nine-month review, we
6 will be able to list by year, the projects we plan to
7 undertake including ADA compliance upgrades such as
8 ramps, accessible entrances, upgraded elevators, and
9 bathrooms.

10 Exterior and structural work such as roof
11 replacements and for sod restorations. Essential
12 health and safety upgrades including sprinklers and
13 upgraded fire alarm and security systems. And lastly
14 HVAC upgrades. Excuse me. Including new boilers and
15 other upgraded heating, ventilating, and air
16 conditioning systems. Many of our branches are in
17 desperate need of investment. At Richmond Town
18 Library on Staten Island, Network Manager Yolanda
19 Gleason is here to make sure that we get the support
20 we need to fix chronic leaks in public areas and
21 woefully inadequate public restrooms. I have to say,
22 Mr. Chairman, I am shocked that I would--we would
23 find ourselves in a place where we need to be
24 searching for the resources to meeting even these
25 minimal needs of these facilities that are so

1 depended up by close to 40 million physical visits a
2 year.
3

4 Today, access to computers and the
5 Internet is a basic necessity. Many of the over two
6 million New Yorkers in the digital dark, libraries
7 are the sole source of light. As my colleagues here
8 can tell you, before and after we close each day our
9 users rely on WiFi leaking from our buildings.
10 Again, Mr. Chairman, this is the capitol of the
11 information age in the 21st Century. Students should
12 not be forced to sit on our stoop to get leaked WiFi
13 to their assigned math online homework. When the
14 branches open, there are lines for every computer.
15 To continue with this critical support, libraries
16 need a steady stream of funding to upgrade and
17 increase our WiFi capacity, refresh the technology we
18 offer both hardware and software, improve user
19 experience through enhanced technology such as self-
20 service offerings. And to continue to research to
21 refresh core networking in infrastructure.

22 These investments allow us to keep pace
23 with such great demand, and Mr. Chairman, we
24 recognize the need for us to be partners. The recent
25 announcement of funds solicited from Google and other

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2 major foundations that allows us to start across the
3 three systems to lend WiFi into 10,000 households in
4 the neediest neighborhood is a start of what we can
5 do as partners. And what we hope that New York
6 together with the leadership of the Mayor on this
7 front can help solve the digital divide problems
8 nationally.

9 For more than a century New York Public
10 Libraries Network of 88 neighborhood libraries across
11 the Bronx, Manhattan, and State Island have served as
12 powerful engines of individual and community
13 empowerment and development. But they require
14 capital investments to ensure that they can continue
15 to provide all New Yorkers with the tools and the
16 essential public spaces they need and deserve. Once
17 again, thank you for all of your support on this very
18 important issue, and for this opportunity to testify.
19 And, of course, we remain available to answer any
20 questions that you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
22 much, Tony, and I want to start with a brief bit of
23 levity. But I know you couldn't see it because you
24 were too engrossed in your very, very powerful
25 testimony. But when you spoke about your New York

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2 Public Library supporters, they raised their hands
3 sometimes as a group. And then when you would call
4 the individual names, the hands would go up
5 [laughter] to be sure that I knew exactly who Sumi
6 Oto was. And it was so well done, and so well
7 choreographed.

8 TONY MARX: Completely spontaneous, Mr.
9 Chairman. [background comments]

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know it was
11 because I can't imagine your having a meeting today
12 saying, All right, so when I say your name, your
13 hands go up like this. [crowd laughter] Right?
14 That probably was not the meeting you had at NYPL
15 yesterday. But then on a more serious note, I want
16 to say that, you know, some of your testimonies make
17 me really angry, as it should make every New Yorker
18 angry that we have to move banks of computers in a
19 library when it rains. Or that the bathrooms aren't
20 places for people to go that continue the dignity
21 that they should experience when they enter into the
22 front door of a library. And, you know, we-- This
23 is hearing is so important. It is so right. This
24 report is so important and so right, and we have to
25 get this right because libraries are too important.

1
2 And in this moment where we have all of
3 these terrific people and terrific places. Mayor de
4 Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, and those of us in the
5 Council, we have an opportunity to make this right
6 once and for all, and make sure that you have the
7 support, the steady support that you need for the
8 next ten years. You know, I'm committed to that. I
9 have been, and today makes me even more so to hear
10 the stories that all of you are sharing. Everything
11 that I think we care about, making sure that there's
12 equity and access across every single neighborhood,
13 and every single borough. Making sure that the poor
14 and the working class are getting an opportunity to
15 get their lives to places where they want them to be.

16 And making sure that immigrants in the
17 City of New York are welcome at every single place,
18 and have all the resources they need. Making sure
19 that children have the classes and the spaces, and
20 the technology, and the information that they need
21 from the earliest of ages. Libraries do that, have
22 always done that every single day. And if we believe
23 in all of those things, then we have to believe in
24 libraries. Because you all do that work better than
25 anybody, and you have often done that work before

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2 anybody else ever did it. And so, libraries made
3 cool all of the things that we were talking about
4 long before they were cool. So, I just want to say
5 that because it's devastating to hear some of the
6 needs and some of the problems.

7 Obviously, I believe the Council has done
8 as much as it could do. But we need a new way of
9 looking at this other than asking council members,
10 individual council members to allocate discretionary
11 money. Which is limited to begin with, and has to be
12 spread out all over a district to include parks and
13 cultural, and NYCHA and so many other needs. They
14 are all equally valuable and equally important, and
15 that is a sure fire way to short change libraries.
16 So we need this and I look forward to the hearing in
17 January that we'll have on the Ten-Year Capital Plan,
18 and to hear from the Administration on what their
19 plans are for this incredibly important piece of our
20 city's landscape.

21 I also want to thank Brooklyn Public
22 Library. You mentioned Bogota Latin Bistro, one of
23 my favorite restaurant in Brooklyn and George and
24 Farid who own and founded that restaurant are good

1
2 friends. And how they have their twins, and it's a
3 great, great story how Bogota Bistro became.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, they won our very
5 first Power Up Competition. So it is a great story.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, and I know
7 Farid before he even knew George, and it has been so
8 exciting to see them win that competition, and have
9 one of the, I think, the most successful and terrific
10 restaurants. I know they're growing their
11 businesses, and that's just so exciting. And that
12 started at the Brooklyn Public Library.

13 LINDA JOHNSON: We made a comment about
14 that at last night's ceremony and, you know, in just
15 11 years they went from the Business and Career
16 Library to the White House where they were recognized
17 recently because of the benefits that they provide to
18 the restaurant workers, which, of course, is such a
19 challenge. So it's a good story.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Even more
21 thrilling to see Farid on the paid sick day
22 commercials that are airing right, because he's been
23 a part of that effort in a good way. I know all of
24 my colleagues have questions who are currently here.
25 So I won't ask too much, but I wanted to ask this

1
2 fundamental question because all of you, and all of
3 your staffs, everyone who works at these three
4 library systems spends every day trying to figure out
5 how to make life better for the eight and a half
6 million people who live in New York City. But the
7 lack of inclusion in a meaningful way in the Ten-Year
8 Capital Plan forces you to do lots of things that you
9 might not ordinarily want to do. It prevents you
10 from doing some of the things that you really think
11 you should be doing, and would rather be doing as
12 opposed to sending a team out to plug the leaking
13 roof or to check on that facade or that boiler. So I
14 wanted to ask All Three Systems to talk just a little
15 bit about how the work you do is hampered by the lack
16 of this fundamental commitment that you all are
17 asking for, and I think everybody in this room agrees
18 with. Bridget, do you want to go first?

19 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: It absolutely
20 affects our day-to-day--our ability on a day-to-day
21 basis to prioritize what our vast needs are. So,
22 what we end up doing is patching instead of full
23 repairing, and that has a long-term effect in that it
24 only exacerbates the problem, and doesn't enable us
25 to really fix it. So instead of replacing an HVAC

1 system, we've got ongoing repairs, and it can go out.
2 And as Linda has already mentioned, we lose service
3 hours because of these things that happen. So the
4 lack of a robust enough allocation for us to meet all
5 of our maintenance needs, really hampers our ability
6 not only to repair things and keep things in a state
7 of good repair on a regular basis, but it absolute
8 impacts public service. And it make us also have to
9 prioritize between the communities that do need
10 expansion. That those libraries that are just
11 bursting at the seams and those that have to have a
12 roof. And that's not always a fair choice to make,
13 and it's a very difficult one when there are very
14 limited resources.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: One of the most important
17 tenets of librarianship is to be consistent, and
18 unplanned closures are devastating to families who
19 depend on libraries for after school programs when
20 we're in the midst of adult literacy classes. And
21 so, the unanticipated closures result in reduced
22 program offerings. And then there's a cascade that
23 follows from this, and it's devastating. So we do
24 feel like sometimes we're talking about real estate
25 all the time, but the fact is that without buildings

1
2 that are adequate to house the programs that we're
3 providing, we're in trouble. But that's such a low
4 bar, right? I mean really we need spaces that not
5 only can house these programs, but that actually
6 inspire people to come in and do things that they
7 might not otherwise plan to do in their lives.

8 We talk about the fact that if you have
9 the inclination and walk through our front door, the
10 opportunities are limitless. And this isn't
11 hyperbole. This is the case, but these doors need to
12 be open consistently, and they need to--they need to
13 enter into spaces that lift the spirit, and not to
14 degrade life as patrons know it.

15 TONY MARX: Somehow, over the course of a
16 long period of time we seem to have created a system,
17 and I use that word loosely, that it maximizes
18 inefficiency. That actually somehow means we cannot
19 plan. We cannot invest. We're using band-aids that
20 only add to the ultimate cost of repairs. That
21 serves no one's interest, number one. Number two, it
22 means we have our great library staff spending much
23 too much time worrying about those band-aids instead
24 of worrying about being great librarians, which is
25 what they are, and want to be. We don't have enough

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2 program space. Come to the branches in the South
3 Bronx, in East Harlem where the needs for English
4 language or citizenship classes. We're teaching
5 coding in those places, or computer skills or after
6 school. They're bursting at the seams and we have
7 unused space because we don't have the resources to
8 bring that into programmable and usable space.

9 And then lastly, as Linda and Bridget
10 have also referenced, the simple fact is particularly
11 in the poorest neighborhoods of New York, the public
12 libraries are the one civic space, the one place
13 people can go, and be treated with respect and get
14 services and have quiet and books and programs. And
15 they like all New Yorkers deserve a space that is not
16 insulting to their dignity. Whether it's buckets to
17 hold a leaky roof. Whether it's facilities that have
18 been left. You know, at the main building at the
19 Schwarzman building it's so inspiring, and people
20 come and they are inspired. Every New Yorker should
21 have that experience wherever they live to come and
22 do the work of the mind, and to apply for jobs or
23 skill themselves up for jobs, or be informed
24 citizens. And we're not able to provide that, and
25 that is a tragedy in this city at this point.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much. How many people agree with what Tony Marx just
4 said? I saw a lot of hands going up. Thank you,
5 Tony, for your passion. You know, some folks are
6 afraid of the number \$1.1 billion. Right? I
7 certainly heard some of that talk, but if we don't do
8 this right would cost us far more in the long term.
9 Not just in the dollar figures, but in what we lose
10 in terms of the human spirit and potential, which is
11 kind of what Tony is speaking about. That's really
12 what libraries are about, aspirational, democratic
13 institutions that make all of us better. And we
14 can't afford not to include libraries in the plan.
15 We can't afford not to put a billion dollars into
16 libraries. The taxpayers of New York deserve it.
17 Every single child in the City of New York deserves
18 it. I think Linda may want to say something.

19 LINDA JOHNSON: I don't even think the
20 number should be daunting given the number of square
21 feet of real estate that we're talking about, the
22 number of libraries that we're talking about. In
23 fact, relative to the budget of the City of New York.
24 And it sounds like a big number when we think about
25 it relative to our personal budgets, but the fact is

1
2 relative to the budgets of other institutions, and
3 agencies in the City of New York, this is a small
4 doable goal.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I agree with
6 you, and my last question is do you think sometimes
7 libraries maybe because they've been around so long
8 and do so much are taken for granted? And I think
9 this gets to the point of why it's so important to
10 have this plan, right? Why it's so important
11 because, you know, this is one moment in time. Times
12 change, elected officials change. I've said this
13 before there will come a moment in time when none of
14 the people at this desk will still be here. And
15 there will be new folks at that table talking to new
16 folks at this table. And libraries can't be subject
17 to the whims of those kinds of changes, right. It's
18 got to be consistent throughout history. So I guess
19 I want to know if you think libraries are taking for
20 granted simply because you've been so good at doing
21 what you do for so long that people just assume that
22 you're always going to do it regardless of how much
23 support you get?

24 LINDA JOHNSON: Never have we been so
25 acutely aware of the fact that people are not taking

1
2 their libraries for granted. When you propose
3 change, it becomes a linchpin for much conversation.
4 And that's not a bad thing because it actually has
5 sent a message to certainly everybody in Brooklyn
6 Public Library. And I suspect I can speak for my
7 colleagues that when talk about changing a library
8 people get very, very involved and passionate about
9 what you're proposing. And that in some ways is
10 challenging, but in many ways is heartening.

11 [Pause]

12 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: I think, too, that
13 now is the time when people are-- There is renewed
14 interest in libraries not only in New York City where
15 it really is quite palpable. But across the country
16 where there is a greater appreciation of the role
17 that libraries play in communities for things like
18 computer access, job readiness, job training, early
19 childhood education and the kinds of things that we
20 provide. So it's almost as if libraries are having
21 renaissance, but or a long time they have been taken
22 for granted because they have just always been those
23 institutions that were there. But for people that
24 haven't been to a library in five or ten years, and
25 they walk in now, it is a wow moment. And more and

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2 more of those experiences are happening on a daily
3 basis with all of the great and renewed attention
4 that discussions like these have.

5 The attention that you've been able to
6 bring to this issue and our colleagues here. It's
7 wonderful but it's happening, and it's a ripple
8 effect. So, yes, I think that was the case. But I
9 think we're really at a turning point with public
10 libraries, and this is the time to take advantage of
11 that. And because we can really demonstrate the
12 impact that we have, we do change lives. We do help
13 people get jobs. We help them read. I mean that's a
14 real tangible thing, and it's not-- I want to say not
15 just a hyperbole. It really is what we do. So we
16 need to grasp this moment, and use it not only to
17 repair and improve and to create inspiring places.
18 But also to make sure that there are open doors for
19 as many hours as we possibly can open them for people
20 to use our services.

21 TONY MARX: Of course, libraries have
22 been taken for granted. They're sort of part of the
23 furniture. And we forget how important they not just
24 as the crucial civic learning spaces, but as the only
25 place where the most needy of New Yorkers can go to

1
2 get what they most need in the 21st Century. The
3 libraries have never been used more than they are
4 now. And that surprises people because they have
5 always been used. We all grew up with them. You
6 know, when I visit the libraries with you, with the
7 City Council Members, visiting recently with the
8 Speaker of the City Council, working with the Mayor
9 and his colleagues. Everyone focused on the needs
10 particularly of those under-served New Yorkers, the
11 close to three million in the digital dark. The
12 bottom third of our city that rely on the libraries
13 because they can't afford books or a quiet place, or
14 computers or computer access. Everyone agrees that
15 those are crucial priorities. I don't understand
16 politics because I think we all agree. So let's do
17 it. [laughter]

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm not sure I
19 understand politics sometimes either, Tony, [laughs]
20 but we're all trying our best here. I want to,
21 before I hand it over to my Co-Chair Costa
22 Constantinides, I just want to say one thing because
23 I heard very powerful stories over the last week that
24 were told to me about libraries. One, we celebrated
25 the fact that we were building a new library, an

1 extended library at La Guardia Community College.
2
3 And obviously that's not a public library in the
4 sense that you all do it, but it is a very, very
5 special place and an incredible library. And one of
6 the students who I met that day who uses it is a
7 young woman who came from Columbia two years ago and
8 she's already in student government at La Guardia
9 Community College doing a fabulous thing.

10 She wants to run for office, and be an
11 elected official one day. I'm grateful she doesn't
12 live in my district. And she was a lot of fun to
13 talk to and get to know, but she shared with me the
14 story about why that library and her local Queens
15 public library are so important to her. Because of
16 the fact that she believes it's her sanctuary from
17 the apartment that she and her family live in. And
18 it is the only place that she can go to, to read and
19 think about her future and her life. And also, print
20 her documents because like a lot of New Yorkers, she
21 may not have a printer and sometimes it may not work,
22 or it may be too much money to fix it. And then I
23 was talking to another person who is currently
24 looking for work, and talking about the fact that
25

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2 \$5.00 to print resumes is a lot of money for that
3 person.

4 And, we have to never lose sight of the
5 fact that libraries are there for those people.
6 Those people who say I cannot afford \$5.00 to go to a
7 commercial establishment and print my resumes. I
8 need this now to fix what is wrong in my life, to
9 find that job. And it is for all of those people
10 that we owe all of this. So I just want to say thank
11 you for what you do. And we will never, ever lose
12 sight of that student at La Guardia Community
13 College, or that young man who is looking for a job
14 right now. And for whom \$5.00 is the difference
15 between making it or not. But the truth is you are
16 the difference between him making it or not. Because
17 the only place he has to go to print that resume and
18 work on that resume is the Sunnyside Branch of the
19 Queens Library. So thank you all for doing what you
20 do, and now I'll ask Chair Constantinides.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you
22 Chair Van Bramer, and thank you all for being here
23 today, and for your testimony. I want to just
24 quickly touch on an issue that Chair Van Bramer
25 talked about and that number of \$1.1 billion, as we

1
2 currently see it today. And much like a sick patient
3 if you don't get care immediately as you sort of walk
4 down the road, it becomes much, much more expensive.
5 What do you sort of perceive what it's so hard to do
6 that. We don't, you know, we're trying to-- This
7 entire process inhibits you from coming up with a
8 long-term plan. But what do you see if we don't act?
9 If we don't take the steps that are necessary to
10 include the libraries? What sort of crisis are we
11 facing three years from now, five years from now as
12 far as that number growing from \$1.1 billion to a
13 horrible X number?

14 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: I'm happy to jump
15 in. I mean this is-- We always are re-evaluating
16 what our capital needs are. So we've got a pretty
17 robust strategic plan that we revisit multiple times
18 a year just to make sure it's current and up to date,
19 and that we have all of the information that we need
20 to at least identify the needs at our facility. So
21 we've got 65 facilities we manage, the 62 full-
22 service libraries plus the three other locations
23 where we provide services. So that's an ongoing
24 process. And, you know, before we were even asked to
25 participate in a collaborative plan and ten-year look

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2 out and a great opportunity, we had already
3 identified over \$300 million worth of needs. So if
4 we project out, and we don't have the funding, if we
5 are not included in this process, and we start to
6 recoup what we need in order to address these needs,
7 that escalation is at least 5% a year. So, we're
8 really looking at even bigger number if we don't
9 start to address that. And, you know, it may sound
10 like a lot, but when you put together New York Public
11 \$600 million, and Brooklyn is three to four and Queen
12 is three to four, I mean that's-- You get there
13 very, very quickly, and that can only continue to
14 grow. And as I think my colleagues have already been
15 incredibly articulate and eloquent in describing is
16 that that doesn't-- It's not just about the
17 facilities. It's about what we do in them, and it
18 really just doesn't enable us to achieve our
19 potential. And to serve the myriad of needs that
20 have been identified by our communities, and what
21 needs to happen in those facilities.

22 [Pause]

23 CHAIRPERSON DICKENS: I definitely agree
24 with my Chairman and each and every one of you that
25 this is something that we can't fail to act on. That

1
2 we have to still come up with a more comprehensive
3 way. Working on the Council for seven years prior to
4 being elected, it never sort of-- Not being on the--
5 my former boss not being on the Cultural Affairs
6 Committee, it's sort of a big secret how it's done.
7 It's not something that you have a-- I think every
8 New Yorker has a real firm understanding of why their
9 library is not getting the things that they needs.
10 So coming up with this more comprehensive way is--
11 And we have a great partner in Mayor de Blasio, and
12 this institution, and each and every one of the
13 libraries to make that happen. And sort of change
14 the culture of what's been for the past several
15 years.

16 We talk about technology. I know that
17 the Hotspots, the Tablets, all the great work that
18 you're all doing when it comes to technology, but can
19 we do better? What do you sort of envision if these
20 capital needs were included, and we were able to move
21 forward in a bigger and larger way? What would your
22 technological sort of wish look like? How do you
23 sort of envision that library of the 21st Century?

24 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, first, one of the
25 things that we do well and that we would like to do

1
2 more of is continue to teach people about technology
3 and to help them with their needs. And the only way
4 to do that is to be open more hours, and to be
5 available to people for a great number of days a
6 week. So, I don't want to lose sight of the fact
7 that it's important that we're there for our patrons
8 as much as we can be. In terms of technology, it's
9 our goal to always be just enough in front of our
10 patrons to be able to be helpful. Not so far in
11 front to leave them behind. The MiFi Project, which
12 was announced just over a week ago, is very exciting
13 because it gives access to our patrons to the web in
14 their homes, and that's really where it should be.
15 Unfortunately, the program is relatively small. It
16 will reach 10,000 homes. Ultimately, this kind of
17 access is at the core of what we do with our mission.
18 And so, we need to be expanding it exponentially.
19 And frankly, we need to be ready for whatever
20 emerging technology is coming our way. So really,
21 it's about helping people use technology in a way
22 that advances all of their goals.

23 TONY MARX: So I'll just reiterate that.
24 We have at the New York Public about 3-1/2 million
25 computer sessions a year. People lining up to be

1
2 able to do what we all take for granted. We need
3 more computers. We need to make sure that capital
4 funds can be used for those computers. We're working
5 with the FCC to ensure that a faster speed of access
6 and more federal subsidy accordingly for us and for
7 all libraries in the United States. We need to train
8 people to be able to use those computers. We're
9 training people to do coding in the South Bronx and
10 Harlem, which has never happened before. And then,
11 of course, there's the subscribe to MiFi Hotspot
12 Project because schools are only 20% of a student's
13 time during the week. And libraries are closed too
14 much of the time, and people want to do what most of
15 us in this room take for granted, research or
16 communication or homework or job skills or job
17 applications. Whatever it is, at home as well. And
18 then lastly, we need to make sure that we have
19 absolutely great books and other physical material
20 collections, and we need to have the resources for
21 electronic material. So that people who want to read
22 in either or both ways have access to everything that
23 they can't necessarily afford, their own subscription
24 to. And that the library has always been the
25 provider of that content as well as the way to get to

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2 the content whether it's in the branch or at home
3 electronically.

4 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: And I
5 wholeheartedly agree with you, and as a father of a
6 five-year-old who his favorite place was the library,
7 one of his favorite places was the library, she is
8 consistently asking for books. And I prefer that
9 medium myself, but there are opportunities for
10 technology as well. And so bringing that to younger
11 patrons is something that I know you're focused on.
12 And as we talked before about the digital divide how
13 we close that, I believe, as you do, that libraries
14 are a key part of that.

15 TONY MARX: Can I just say that the
16 Mayor's Office, his counsel and others as well as the
17 City Council, you know, the passion in this town for
18 solving the digital divide issues. Close to three
19 million New Yorkers, close to 90 million Americans in
20 the digital dark. That is unbelievable in the 21st
21 Century, and unacceptable. And particularly I have
22 to say that, you know, that what we've been working
23 at for instance in this city with the MiFi lend, and
24 hopefully finding a solution for the city and perhaps
25 beyond, wouldn't be possible without the leadership

1
2 of so many folks. And in particular of the Mayor and
3 Maya Wiley his counsel and others in this building.

4 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I have two
5 final questions. I want to make sure I go quickly
6 because I have colleagues behind me that have waited
7 very patiently. One question when it comes to sort
8 of smaller branches coming into communities, and on
9 the Queens Library both at the Queens Museum and at
10 the Queens Center Mall there have been pop-up
11 branches that have sort of come into existence. I
12 know you're doing the same in Brooklyn and Manhattan.
13 But talk about how we can sort of utilize that model
14 better to sort of get the library to places that it's
15 a little bit further away. I know I represent a
16 community in Jackson Heights that's 25 blocks from
17 their newest library. So I'm sort of looking at how
18 we can sort of take that model and utilize it better.

19 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, once we take care
20 of the current issues. [laughs]

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: I hear you
22 on that. I agree.

23 LINDA JOHNSON: No, no seriously. In
24 Brooklyn there are many examples of neighborhoods
25 that didn't 25 years ago that have no library service

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2 right now. And that's wrong, but we have our eye on
3 neighborhoods where we would love to be delivering
4 library services. But right now, we're focused on
5 the footprint that we have

6 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: Yeah, I agree. I
7 mean our first priorities are infrastructure, and
8 then expanding our current locations. But the
9 library express model, which is what we're exploring
10 at the Queen Center Mall as well as models like what
11 we are planning with the Queens Museum do represent
12 new opportunities for us to provide library services
13 where people are already gathering. And I think that
14 that's so critical because there are challenges of
15 mobility in getting access to the libraries. So it
16 is a model we will continue to explore and think
17 about as there are new opportunities with other
18 culturals, with other partnership opportunities that
19 we find along our ways as we're doing our community
20 engagement.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Lastly,
22 something I brought up during the Center for an Urban
23 Future's time on the panel. But how do ensure doing
24 great work when it comes to missions and being green
25 and sustainable? How do you sort of see within this

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2 Ten-Year Capital Plan the library's roles in being a
3 driver in reducing the City's emissions and
4 continuing the very sustainable and resiliency model
5 that our Mayor has put forth and the City Council has
6 put forth?

7 LINDA JOHNSON: The Kensington Library,
8 which is the first library that Brooklyn built from
9 ground up in like 15 years, opened about a year ago,
10 and is LEED Certified. And it's just a model of
11 what's to come in the future. So I can't imagine
12 that any construction won't be sensitive to
13 environment issues. And, of course, especially in
14 those neighborhoods that were hit hard by Hurricane
15 Sandy. Whenever we're working on those buildings
16 we'll be keeping an eye towards resilience and making
17 sure that they are sustainable.

18 TONY MARX: I think we all are committed
19 in this city. Certainly the leadership of the city
20 is committed to sustainability issues. That is
21 reflected in our construction projects, our
22 renovation projects. And it's part of in addition
23 the other priorities that have been expressed. So
24 we've talked today about how what the library could
25 do could be partnering with the affordable housing

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2 needs of this city, as well as the educational needs,
3 Pre-K, after school, et cetera. Sustainability is on
4 that crucial list of things, and we have to do all
5 that. Again, it means we have to be able to be
6 purposeful in planning to find solutions that hit
7 those multiple issues in the most efficient way
8 possible.

9 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: I think really the
10 city has an opportunity here to use libraries as the
11 model for what that can look like for public
12 buildings. We would love to be in the place where
13 green technology is showcased for those kinds of
14 insulations. And I know our BP Capital is really
15 anxious to get solar panels on all the libraries. So
16 that's our goal, but we want to be able to do that in
17 a planned way across our system not only for the
18 short-term gain, but also as a model for the rest of
19 the city, for residential, other commercial and the
20 whole country.

21 CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you
22 all for your testimony.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
24 much Chair Constantinides. Before we hear from
25 Council Member Lander and then Levin to close out

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2 this panel, I just wanted to say, Bridget in terms of
3 the North Jackson Heights area, Council Member
4 Constantinides and I have already like mapped out a
5 plan for the mall where Dante's Catering was. So
6 we're talking about it. We'll come up with a plan
7 for that, but that sounds like a really exciting
8 opportunity for North Jackson Heights to get a
9 library. We're also going to help with that. [sic]
10 So Council Member Brad Lander, a great champion of
11 libraries and a great supporter of libraries, thank
12 you so much.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Mr.
14 Chairman and Chair Constantinides, as well. It's
15 good to be a moment when it feels like we--there's
16 consensus building and some real opportunities for
17 progress. I think your leadership is a strong part
18 of that. I want to thank a few other partners as
19 well. I'm sorry to miss the Center for an Urban
20 Future testimony earlier, but that content--[off mic]
21 Well, the gentleman that was over there before I was
22 pointing at him rather than the empty chair. [on mic]
23 The conference was wonderful the other day, and
24 really I think the balance of attention to need in
25 very detailed ways to data, and to some sort of

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2 inspiring ideas really made a big difference. I want
3 to thank Julie Sandorf. The Resident Foundation has
4 obviously been a real important stewards of this
5 positive energy forward and to the systems. And what
6 feels to me sort of not like just increased
7 collaboration, but really a growing family of people
8 who care. So I want to welcome Michele Bonan to the
9 Brooklyn Public Library. Bridget, this is my first
10 hearing with you here. You know, in my household
11 there is some debate. My wife is very--you know,
12 really treasures the partnership that she and where
13 she works out of the Queens Public Library. And I
14 think I saw that she's still here. Yes, it's also
15 wonderful to have Alice Wineshaw [sp?] in the room
16 today, and Tony you're great, and your growing team.

17 And one thing that I've seen in the
18 branches in Brooklyn that reflects that is the sense
19 of active stewardship of friends groups growing in
20 strength. That the people are here in this space,
21 the folks that were in the room the other day at the
22 conference, you can feel it more strongly. Usership
23 has been strong and growing for a long time. So
24 that's not new, but the sense that that's a set of
25 people who care together, and are finding ways to be

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2 active together. Whether that's just in their
3 branches or whether that's here in City Hall, it
4 makes a big difference. We can't possibly achieve
5 the level of capital commitment unless that usership
6 and need become constituency in action. So I
7 appreciate the work that the community in this room
8 is doing to build that together. It's necessary, and
9 it feels to me both in the branches and here like
10 it's really growing. I just think it's worth to call
11 that out. So thanks to everyone especially including
12 our Chair.

13 I'm also really enthusiastic to hear the
14 inclusion in the Ten-Year Capital Plan of your
15 systems. The Chair and wrote a letter to the
16 Administration and to the Mayor asking this very
17 question about libraries knowing that for the first
18 it's to the credit of the Administration. But from
19 what I can remember, there's deliberateness to the
20 Ten-Year Capital Plan itself. As opposed to being a
21 kind of laundry list of projects where the budget
22 director gives you your name. And has the job of
23 telling you no more than that. They're trying to
24 think together across agencies about the-- You know
25 and see the Ten-Year Capital Plan as a real

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2 prioritized infrastructure plan for the city. It's
3 wonderful that you guys feel that and seem to
4 included.

5 Obviously, the proof is in the pudding.
6 We've got to see what's in that document, and we're
7 going to have a very large gap and need. But still
8 just to have it there. And then to be mindful of
9 this full set of needs. Together you've really done
10 a very nice job of articulating basic state of good
11 repair; attention to resiliency; attention to
12 connectivity and the digital divide. Attention to
13 the kinds of new and inspiring spaces. You know, I
14 certainly like to get people out to the Kensington
15 branch. Linda, as we've talked about, which is the
16 one new branch in our neck of the woods. So, yes,
17 it's outside of my district and in Council Member
18 Greenfield's district. But many of my constituents
19 use it. You know, adding all of that up, you really
20 see that this need is very practical and very
21 inspiring and the work we have to do together.

22 Two other ways I feel, you know, that
23 we're stepping up to some extent, you mentioned,
24 Linda, that Brooklyn--the Brooklyn Delegation doubled
25 its capital commitment to the library in this year's

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2 capital budget was the number one priority of the
3 Brooklyn Delegation. Now, our other boroughs are
4 outstanding, and there's no greater champion of the
5 libraries that the Council and our Majority Leader
6 and Chairman. But we rank it first. We were to
7 double the capital commitment from \$5 million to \$10
8 million as part of the 18 that you mentioned. And we
9 feel very proud of that. But I do want to make sure
10 I have my math right. So, what you're putting in the
11 Ten-Year Capital Plan is \$375 million worth of
12 capital needs and priorities unfunded? So if my math
13 is correct, even if we were able to keep this
14 doubled, and therefore, I think an unprecedented
15 level of commitment of \$18 million, it would be 21
16 years before we were able to pay for today's needs.

17 LINDA JOHNSON: And, of course, in 21
18 years we will have who knows?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yes, those are
20 today's needs. That's not the next 21 years worth of
21 needs. So, hopefully it won't be 20 times that over
22 the next 20 years because that's a lot of backlog.
23 So I do think that speaks to, you know, some of the
24 need for creative strategies in the kinds of things
25 that you're proposing. Because even if we come up

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2 with significantly more dollars in the budget, the
3 things that we've done in the past, I don't see how
4 they're going to get to that goal level of \$1
5 billion. I will say one other good tool at the
6 margin that I just think is worth reporting is that
7 every year of participatory budgeting in my district,
8 which has now grown from four districts in the city
9 to 25. And I don't know if this would be the case in
10 every district, but in my district so far it's been a
11 participatory budgeting project winner every year.
12 Which speaks to the passion that people have for the
13 libraries, and, you know, they're putting it high up
14 the list of priorities. Again, those are small
15 projects, a couple hundred thousand dollars. Then
16 sort of my definition in the participatory budgeting
17 may have to be a little boutique. People aren't
18 excited about, you know, sealing the roof or the
19 wall. So, you know, but I think it's worth just
20 making clear that has been happening. I think that
21 goes along with the shared sense of stewardship.

22 So, I do have a couple of questions, one
23 I just want to make sure-- You mentioned in your
24 testimony the specific branch. And I know this has
25 been announced as an intended use of the funds from

1
2 the Brooklyn Heights Library transaction. So that's
3 \$3-1/2 million that would go for a new entrance and
4 accessibility to--for the Pacific Street Branch.

5 LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Now, that to my
7 recollection is not the total amount that you had
8 indicated, you know, needed for that branch to be up
9 to state of good repair.

10 LINDA JOHNSON: No, it's not. That
11 branch has close to \$10 million in need total.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But putting \$3-
13 1/2 million in would represent a solid commitment,
14 which I think you had already sort of made
15 theoretically. But \$3-1/2 million is a lot more than
16 theoretical that the BPS Systems investing in that
17 branch intends to maintain it. And will work with
18 this Council and others to preserve it and maintain
19 it as a library, and find the ways to keep it strong?

20 LINDA JOHNSON: We will find a way.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Good. You know,
22 that has not been-- You know, I don't if we should
23 go that deeper [sic] into the hearing, but that's a--
24 it's a big deal ad there were a lot of reporting when
25 there was some doubt or question as to whether that

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2 branch would continue to have a home and a space
3 central within the Brooklyn Public Library System.
4 So I hope the announcement that it does and is, and
5 has a material commitment will also get some
6 attention. So thank you.

7 I want to ask just sort of a final
8 question about how you think about the evolution of
9 what libraries are. And you've spoken to this in
10 some important ways. But I'm curious a little more
11 about what research and data and user surveys and
12 brain stuff. You know, we're in a time of evolution.
13 I have something of the Luddite in me. I love the
14 lover, I love the books and I love the quiet. So,
15 you know, and I want that be strong in our libraries
16 for generations to come. At the same time, I know
17 that the evolving needs of technology, and not just
18 e-Readers, but even how you write and create. So
19 it's not just on what material are you reading books.
20 It's where do you learn digital literacy and cultural
21 literacy, and how to create music and art as well as
22 more traditional literature and written forms? So,
23 you know, that's something emerging, and I wonder
24 what informs you're thinking about. I get that at
25 one level it's like people sign up for the computer

1
2 time, and need to search for jobs. So if you've got
3 long lines, and more demand, you say all right, we
4 need more computers. But what sort of thinking or
5 research is guiding you in thinking about the
6 evolution of what our neighborhood public libraries
7 or branch libraries should become? It seems to me it
8 should also inform what kinds of branches we're
9 building. Some of this was present in the Koch [sic]
10 Research, but I'm curious about how you guys are
11 thinking about it.

12 TONY MARX: So, I'm going to start by
13 telling you we ask all of our users when they come in
14 and through technology, or we give them opportunities
15 onsite to tell us what they need more of. What they
16 want to see at their library. We are increasingly
17 reaching out through those kinds of mechanisms to
18 people who tell us they're not users of the libraries
19 to see what they would like. We are having meetings.
20 Wherever we are, for instance, doing a renovation of
21 a branch, we're going to have community meetings to
22 ask people what they would want. Over the last week
23 for instance in our Midtown campus renovation we got
24 13,000 responses to an elaborate set of surveys.

25

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2 I've been reading those non-stop since they've been
3 coming in.

4 We also look at what's happening around
5 the country at other libraries and learn from our
6 peers, and other institutions. I think what's clear
7 is the following: This seems to me books are not
8 going away, and we need to preserve our collections
9 and enhance our collections. The need for great
10 librarians is increasing because the flood of
11 information is overwhelming unless you get some help.
12 People need space, a third space. Especially if you
13 can't afford a Starbuck's coffee, the library is the
14 place. People need free educational programs that
15 come out of the library's work, which is why we are
16 shifting into a more proactive stance. And they need
17 electronic access to more information. The truth of
18 the matter is the demands on the library are
19 increasing because in the 21st Century the scope of,
20 if you will, the life of the mind as fundamental not
21 only to democracy and to the society, but to the
22 economy is increasing. And the library is the
23 foundation of that, and we have to do all of those
24 things to make sure that we can help people keep up.

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: So the Luddite in you
3 will appreciate the fact that we still have
4 microfiche, and I bring that up because--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] So
6 that's a technology gadget. [sic]

7 LINDA JOHNSON: --there's a moment of
8 levity. [laughter] But it actually illustrates a
9 point, and the point is that our mission actually
10 hasn't deviated much since Andrew Carnegie and the
11 City of New York entered into the Pact, and that is
12 that we are here to shepherd the borough's literacy
13 needs. And it's just that the definition of literacy
14 has broadened so greatly, and especially in the last
15 ten years. So, we have done neighborhood
16 assessments as well, and not dissimilar from what
17 Tony just described. I think that the key thing
18 really is to think about the fact that we are in the
19 midst of the greatest transition probably since the
20 Guttenberg. And that's partly the reason why we've
21 had such a steep increase in the demands that are
22 placed upon us. So in order to continue with the
23 mission of being here for all of our patrons
24 regardless of the language that they want to read,
25

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2 the platform on which they're most comfortable, the
3 spaces in which they like to work.

4 We understand that as many people go to
5 Google when they go online as go to YouTube. Or
6 perhaps I should say that the other way around, but
7 what that indicates is that as many people who are
8 looking to find material to read, there are also
9 people who are looking to find answers to their
10 questions that they can watch. And so if you're
11 looking for information that way, you've also got to
12 be able to express yourself that way. And so, the
13 digital age is creating a much more complicated set
14 of problems for our librarians to solves. Yes,
15 librarians are more crucial than ever to the delivery
16 of our services. And actually, just being nimble and
17 receptive to the technology that's coming our way is
18 really the most critical thing that I can say today.
19 Because it expands our lives. It makes them richer,
20 and it doesn't help anyone to sort of dig in to any
21 one platform, or any one form of information. The
22 interesting thing today is the diversity of material
23 that we're offering.

24 BRIDGET QUINN-CAREY: I think I'll just
25 weigh in, too, though because I think that the last

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2 page that we put on our testimony maybe demonstrates,
3 and maybe will make you feel good. Particularly
4 about the conversation we've been having today about
5 investing in facilities. Actually, our experience
6 has been that it leads to a dramatic use in our
7 collection. So in two of our most recently renovated
8 libraries, Auburn and Glen Oaks, the circulation
9 dramatically increased of print materials after we
10 reopened those libraries. So clearly, print is still
11 in demand. It's something that we still obviously I
12 would give quite a lot of money to, but the-- And we
13 hold that. That is part of our brand, but it's not
14 the only thing any more.

15 So while that's still key and important,
16 and we will hold it, we do look to these other
17 technologies. And we look to create curated
18 technological experiences. And that's part of the
19 goal that we have when created our apps on our Google
20 Tablets that we're lending. It's really using the
21 skills of our professional staff of our librarians to
22 create an opportunity for people to interact with the
23 library, but do it virtually. We still need to
24 curate the world of information, and that's what
25 libraries and librarians are so good at. And what we

1
2 will continue to do, because it really is that
3 education and learning. And having that experienced
4 where those people need it, whether it's in a
5 physical location, or in their home, or in their
6 school, or on their stoop. Where it is, we want to
7 be there.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Very helpful.

9 I'll just kind of maybe add a point or two at the
10 end. You know, I think in that context, Linda, I
11 want to call out the partnership that we've worked on
12 with Brick [sic] involves them bringing digital media
13 creation technology, cameras with editing equipment
14 into the brand. Which is what they raise the money
15 for, and then offering classes. People can learn to
16 use them, and then check out those pieces of
17 equipment. So that's some capital needed technology.
18 It's also an organizational partnership. The Planned
19 Parenthood Partnership doesn't involve any capital,
20 but it does involve both space. And it really is
21 about empowering librarians who are already people
22 getting questions about reproductive health
23 information. And, in fact, the article on that was
24 really good. So it's not for today, but I think some
25 of these partnership questions are interesting as

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well, but community schools model that the Mayor is putting so much-- rightly so much attention on resources into. It is partly because those hubs of service provision need space, and the libraries also provide that in a very powerful way, and one that is another reason why we've got to take care of the capital. Perhaps at some point we can explore it even more deeper looking to it as a partnership as well. [sic] Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Council Member Lander, and I love the reference of Brick, and the partnerships between cultural organizations and our libraries, which many of them exist and many more will. Now, we'll hear lastly for this panel from Council Member Steve Levin.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to this panel for your testimony. Ms. Johnson, I wanted to ask a few questions. As you know, I represent the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights and the site of the proposed plan to redevelop that library site. I wanted to ask a couple of questions pertaining to that issue. The first question is I wanted to get your take on a piece of legislation that was passed

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2 in Albany this summer. And that was signed into law
3 by the Governor allowing the Brooklyn and Queens
4 Library Systems to be eligible for bond financing,
5 capital financing under the State Dormitory
6 Authority. Was this something that you worked on
7 with the State Legislature, and what are your
8 opinions about it, and is it a feasible mechanism
9 with which to raise capital funds?

10 LINDA JOHNSON: We did play a role in
11 working with our State Legislators on this. We've
12 been-- The city is actually-- I'm actually a little
13 bit uncomfortable testifying about the mechanism. It
14 doesn't solve all of our issues. And we are, as you
15 can see from a lot of the steps that we've taken over
16 the past year open to any number of different
17 creative ways to finance. And so, I don't think it
18 solves everything, but we thought it would, in fact,
19 be positive enough that it's something that we should
20 pursue. And we are using funds that come through
21 DASNY to do all sorts of work on the technology
22 front.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but I mean
24 would--would things like, you know, major capital
25 improvements, you know, something like the \$5 million

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2 or so that's needed for the HVAC upgrades at the
3 Brooklyn Heights branch be eligible for that type of
4 funding? Would it make sense? I mean what was
5 thought process behind doing this, and what can--
6 What is eligible for this? What could be done with
7 this?

8 LINDA JOHNSON: It still needs to be paid
9 for. The reason that we went down that path was, in
10 fact, to help fund technology investments. And would
11 have to be much larger than the legislation that was
12 moved into law.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: It would have to
14 be-- You mean the cost of a project would have to
15 be--

16 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Yeah, well,
17 first-- Let me first go back to the premise, which
18 is that a new air conditioning system in Brooklyn
19 Heights would solve the problem, and that it's a \$5
20 million investment. And you and I have had many
21 conversations about this issues. A new HVAC system
22 doesn't actually address the needs of that community,
23 and doesn't make up for the fact that that library is
24 inefficient. And lacks the kind of space that we
25 need to deliver the service that we're in the

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2 business of delivering. So that's the first piece.
3 The second piece is that regardless of the
4 technology, you still need a lot more money to do the
5 work than the legislation is going to allow us to
6 raise through the bonds.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, so the bonds
8 are limited in terms of their scope? I don't, I mean
9 I-- Just kind of-- I heard about this, you know,
10 through a third party and somewhat recently. So I
11 didn't-- I've never, you know, I've never had a
12 conversation with BPL about, you know, kind of what
13 went into this. I mean, obviously state legislation
14 passes both houses of the State Legislature. It's
15 signed by the Governor. That's a significant measure
16 with a lot of them, and it's not just happenstance
17 that that happens.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: It was a technique that
19 we use specifically with an ION technology, and as
20 you can see from my testimony, I'm not as well versed
21 on it as I should be perhaps. But it's not a
22 solution to the capital needs that we have across the
23 borough. It's not just-- Well, living with it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Well, okay. If we
25 could follow up, you know, later on, on that issue.

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2 With regard to the plan for Brooklyn Heights branch,
3 you know, I went there the other day, and looked
4 around just thinking about the type of uses that it
5 gets, and there is a-- Currently, there is a
6 business branch, and a neighborhood branch together,
7 correct? And then there is some additional space
8 that's not publicly accessible. Can you break down
9 those? What's the business branch in terms of square
10 footage? What's the neighborhood branch in terms of
11 square footage?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: So actually I put a
13 third. Yeah, the non-accessible square footage
14 breaks down into two parts. There are below ground
15 storage spaces in that library, which are a
16 repository for documents and material that very few
17 people ever request access to. There is a large
18 percentage of space for staff that's not available to
19 the public, which is just a function of the way
20 library services were delivered during 1962 when that
21 library was designed.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

23 LINDA JOHNSON: And there's a very wide
24 staircase in the back of that library, which I guess
25 was a design feature, but just takes up an enormous

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2 amount of space in that building. So all tolled the
3 space that's available for the business library and
4 for the neighborhood library, the public library is
5 bout 26,000 square feet, 28,000 square feet. That,
6 in part, is the business library that is on your left
7 as you walk through the front door. That function of
8 the Business and Career Library is actually moving
9 into the Central Library regardless of what happens
10 in Brooklyn Heights. And it's being moved there for
11 two reasons: One, because the services that are
12 delivered in that library are being used by people
13 who live across the borough. It's no longer a place
14 where people who are just doing business in Downtown
15 Brooklyn need to go to work. Now that the companies
16 in Brooklyn have Internet access, and materials at
17 their fingertips in their offices, that space is
18 being used more and more by burgeoning entrepreneurs
19 who live in the center and the southern parts of the
20 borough. And so it's important to put it in a place
21 where it's accessible by the most number of people
22 who are using it. We've done surveys of people to
23 determine where those folks are coming from. And the
24 other thing is that we built in the Central Library,
25 the information commons, which houses a lot of very

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2 sophisticated technology. And has very expensive
3 databases, and the work that's being done there is
4 work that complements what's being done in the
5 Business and Career Library. And so there's some
6 value to bringing those two operations together.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. So for the
8 Business branch just in terms of the square footage
9 breakdown. So altogether, the inaccessible square
10 footage is--?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: It's like 30,000 square
12 feet.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: 30,000 square feet
14 and then the business branch for when you walk in on
15 the left and when you walk in on the right that
16 together is--?

17 LINDA JOHNSON: About 32,000 square feet
18 all tolled.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: That's 32,000
20 square feet?

21 LINDA JOHNSON: Oh, I'm sorry, because
22 I'm not-- I'm sorry, 14,000 square feet. I have not
23 included the below ground, yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, so 14 when
25 you walk on the first floor on either side?

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LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And then the
neighborhood branch, which is the second floor--

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LINDA JOHNSON: Right. [background
comments] I'm sorry. So the neighborhood library,
the branch library in Brooklyn Heights is
approximately 25,000 square feet.

9

10

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, that's the
second floor?

11

12

13

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah. No, that's all
tolled. That's the business library and the--
Right. So, 15 for the neighborhood--

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15

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
Okay.

16

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LINDA JOHNSON: --13 for the business
library.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and that's
28. Okay. So then the proposed branch is what size?

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LINDA JOHNSON: Um, it is about 21,000
square feet.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: 21. Okay. So
there is a-- My concern just as a-- And this is
just kind of on first blush, but my concern with that
proposal then is that we're seeing a net reduction of

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2 7,000 square feet of publicly accessible space. You
3 know, to me whether it's-- whether it's business or
4 branch, neighborhood branch, it's still the
5 neighborhood library. So when the people are--

6 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] It means
7 that the material will be different. So it is
8 neighborhood, but it's also taken up by material, and
9 the material that will be presented in the new
10 library will be more focused on the neighborhood.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, but I mean
12 there could be other uses for say that 6,000 or 7,000
13 square feet other than like old outdate like business
14 directories. But there are other uses that the
15 neighborhood-- You know, the neighborhood is going
16 to basically see a net reduction in publicly
17 accessible square footage, and, you know, there's
18 something about that is problematic. That there is--
19 You know, whether or not--

20 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] There's two
21 issues. There's quality and there's quantity, and I
22 don't think anybody, and I can tell you because I
23 even have board members who live in the neighborhood
24 and go into the Brooklyn Heights branch and tell me
25 how woefully inadequate it is. And that's a polite

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2 way of putting it. So, we will build state-of-the-
3 art space that is beautifully designed that will
4 provide all the kinds of features that I spoke about
5 in my testimony. Flexibility, inspiring spaces.
6 Everything that Brooklyn Heights currently does not
7 offer in way that we think the very minimal
8 difference between what we're building and what we're
9 giving up will actually end up being a net positive
10 for the community.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but it's
12 still, there's still a decrease, and no matter how
13 much better the quality is, there's still a decrease
14 in quantity in that. I'm just putting it out there
15 as problematic.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Fine.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And then there is
18 also an auditorium space, correct?

19 LINDA JOHNSON: We're counting the
20 auditorium space in the-- And there will be an
21 auditorium in the new library as well as there is an
22 auditorium in the existing one. And that space was
23 counted in the total square footage that we just went
24 through.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and the new
3 auditorium--

4 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] That will
5 be a better auditorium.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. Now, okay,
7 so then there's this other issue that I wanted to
8 touch upon, which is that in the proposed plan there
9 is auditorium space to be purchased or a condo to
10 Saint Ann's School, a private school and that is not
11 the auditorium that you're speaking of, right?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: There will be an
13 auditorium in the library. There will be a
14 condominium that Saint Ann's will acquire, and I
15 believe that at my last meeting on this subject it
16 had not been determined how that space would be used.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and they're
18 going to pay for that space as if it were a
19 residential condominium?

20 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, although it won't
21 be a residence. As though it were a condominium.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but it's--
23 because-- because there's a cost for that. There is
24 space that's either-- So, if you were to look at
25 that space say it's 10,000 square feet or whatever,

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2 that's 10,000 square feet that's not-- that's not
3 going to public library space. And it's not going to
4 residential condominium space. It's going to some
5 other third type, you know, third thing. You know a
6 school, a not-for-profit school, an private school
7 condominium thing. But if they're not paying the
8 same rate as a residential condominium per square
9 foot, then the BLP is making less of a return then on
10 that space. And there is public-- I mean there is
11 really no public--

12 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Again,
13 you're presuming--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: There is no public
15 benefit to it. Other than the money coming in, other
16 than like the revenue generated from it, from that
17 sale of that condominium square footage. There is no
18 public benefit to having a private school have
19 auditorium space in this development. I can see--

20 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] There's a
21 premise here.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --that a private
23 school would.

24 LINDA JOHNSON: There's a premise here
25 that they're not paying some fair market rate for the

1
2 space, and I don't know enough to comment on that one
3 way or the other. I do know that there-- That a god
4 part of the space is below ground.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But then if it's--
6 It has to be weight I think in terms of whether that
7 would be more appropriate for a public library space,
8 a publicly accessible library space.

9 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, it-- this is a part
10 of the transaction that is the-- It's not library
11 space. It's part of the development project. It's
12 part of what makes the transaction that work, you
13 know the libraries that-- This is what we need in
14 order to deliver great library service, and this is
15 what we need to-- We need to pull money out of this
16 property in order to invest it elsewhere. We need a
17 core and shell, and you and I have walked through all
18 the elements of the RFP. This is a part of the deal
19 that the library has nothing to do with.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Except that the
21 library chose this.

22 LINDA JOHNSON: We had nothing to do with
23 how the space, other than what the library needs is
24 being fit out.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, but say if
3 this is 8 to 10,000 square feet, and we're 8 to
4 10,000 square feet--

5 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] If the
6 library took more square footage in the building,
7 then we would pull few dollars out of the transaction
8 to invest elsewhere. And we would spend more money
9 fitting out the total library. So there's a
10 balancing act that's going on.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Sure. Yeah, I
12 know but, you know, at the same time, you know, this
13 is the community that is, in fact, having a new
14 development with all the impacts. I mean there's a
15 local elementary school that's at 140% capacity, and
16 this is the local zoned elementary school. There are
17 impacts that the local neighborhood has to them there
18 that's totally on them. And if they're the ones
19 bearing that burden, then yeah you'd have to look at
20 what, you know, where the benefit is. I mean it's
21 just-- You know, if that's a-- I understand why BPL
22 is pursuing this as an option to raise capital funds.
23 But I think it's important to recognize that the
24 local community senses a burden with a development
25 like this. That it's not just-- You know, it's not

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2 just-- It's not free money for that community. BPL
3 raise money no problem, but it's the community itself
4 that's going to have to then deal with the burdens
5 that are associated with that additional development.
6 And it's significant, and it should be significantly
7 weighed moving forward.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: I respect what you're
9 saying. You know, our goal is to build a great
10 library in Brooklyn Heights, a better library than
11 exists today. And while I wish the building could
12 solve every problem in the community, it can't, and
13 we're doing the best to maximize the space, and do as
14 much as we can.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
16 much. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much, Council Member Levin, and I just want to close
19 this panel, and thank the three of you for your
20 leadership, for your passion, and thank your teams.
21 Both your staff and volunteers, and my Friends group
22 members who may be here. And for those of you who
23 are here for the first time, this is a great, great
24 lesson in City Council hearings. And sometimes they
25 go a little bit longer than we expected them to go.

1
2 And the truth is we have a lot more to go. So for
3 those of you who love libraries so much that you
4 would like to have five hours of testimony about
5 libraries, feel free to stay. But I understand that
6 some folks in the room may have to go back to work,
7 or back home. So, with that, I just want to say
8 thank you. We're committed. I'm committed, and I
9 look forward to hearing back from all of you again in
10 January at the appointed hearing on the Capital Plan,
11 the Ten-Year Capital Plan. And happy holidays to the
12 three of you. With that, we'll say good-bye to the
13 three library heads, and call Julie Sandorf from the
14 Charles Revson Foundation. And she'll be joined on
15 that panel by Christian Zabriski, Urban Librarians
16 Unite, and I believe Christabel Gough from the
17 Society for the Architecture of the City. So, we'll
18 have Julie first. Then Christian, and then
19 Christabel.

20 [Pause, background comments]

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. We
22 still have to get that on, Julie.

23 JULIE SANDORF: Okay. Good evening.

24 [laughs]

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.
3 You're on. Thank you.

4 JULIE SANDORF: I want to thank Chairman
5 Van Bramer, Jimmy and Chairman Constantinides for
6 inviting me to speak with you today. And Revson
7 Foundation operates a variety of grant programs in
8 the areas of urban--

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: [interposing] Quiet
10 please. Quiet.

11 JULIE SANDORF: --in the areas of urban
12 affairs, education, biomedical research, and Jewish
13 life. And some of the most innovative and successful
14 projects we have funded in New York have centered on
15 our public libraries. When the first largest book
16 publishers refused to sell e-books to libraries, we
17 supported the New York Public Library in leading a
18 nationwide effort to secure free access to digital
19 materials for all library patrons. We financed the
20 creation of a new Department of Outreach Services at
21 the Brooklyn Public Library so that it could form
22 partnerships with community organizations, and better
23 reach under-served groups throughout the borough.
24 When the Lincoln Center wanted to extend its world
25 class arts and culture beyond its campus, we funded

1
2 performances in branch libraries across Queens as
3 well as funding the Queens Museum, Queens Library co-
4 location to become the national model for museum
5 library co-locations.

6 People are often surprised by the Revson
7 Foundation's commitment to public libraries because
8 there's a common misperception that public libraries
9 become obsolete in the digital age. However, anyone
10 who has spent any time in any branch in the New York
11 City Public Libraries knows this couldn't be further
12 from the truth. And that's why in 2011, we
13 commissioned the Center for an Urban Future to
14 document how New Yorkers are using the public
15 libraries. And as has been previously spoken, the
16 Branches of Opportunity Report showed that not only
17 do millions of New Yorkers use their public libraries
18 every day, but that the usage has reached record
19 levels. What makes this usage particularly
20 extraordinary is that the city's public libraries are
21 suffering from decades of neglect and under-
22 investment, which has resulted in \$1.1 billion in
23 capital needs. As detailed in the Center for an
24 Urban Future's most recent report, Re-Envisioning New
25 York City's Branch Libraries, as was said, the

1
2 average library branch is 61 years old and with a
3 quarter of them built a century ago. These numbers
4 are staggering, and directly affect the experience of
5 New Yorkers, millions of New Yorkers who rely on the
6 critical services of the city's public libraries.

7 We have heard from many New Yorker's
8 first hand, and would like to share what they have
9 said about the state of their public libraries.

10 These quotes-- these following quotes are pulled
11 from the 10,000 submissions to the New York City
12 Neighborhoods Libraries Awards that we received just
13 over the last five weeks. It's an awards program
14 honoring branch libraries, co-sponsored by the Revson
15 and the Stavros Nicarchos Foundation.

16 A patron in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
17 wrote that her library is in dire need for more
18 equipment. In the winter they have to shut down
19 because they have no heat. In the summer their hours
20 are cut because they don't have air conditioning.
21 These are basic necessities for workers and for the
22 users of the library, too. Clara in the Bronx
23 explained how her children go to the library everyday
24 after school to do their homework but, quote,
25 "Whenever it rains, the library gets flooded

1
2 especially in the children's section. Arriving
3 families are turned away. It would be so nice to
4 have funds to make the necessary upgrades for flood
5 prevention." A patron from Sunset Park described
6 how, "Last summer the air conditioning broke down,
7 and was out for almost three weeks. Then they
8 installed two units that eliminated six of the
9 precious laptop computer plugs, which were already
10 scarce. Our library needs the money more than most."

11 Throughout the city, librarians go above
12 and beyond the call of duty to assist their patrons
13 despite the many challenges they face. Elizabeth, a
14 patron of the Tompkins Square Library wrote to tell
15 us about her experience. Quote, "At the entrance to
16 my library is a lift for disabled people. Sometimes
17 the lift does not work, and that's when I love our
18 librarians the most. They run down the stairs to
19 take my returns, and hand over the materials I want
20 to take out. Sometimes I give them the names of
21 favorite authors, and they deliver books to me for my
22 approval. That's what I call service."

23 In nomination after nomination New
24 Yorkers of every stripe describe how critical their
25 neighborhood libraries are. How they consider them

1 to be their second home, and how much help they need.
2 The city's public libraries are already at the
3 forefront of organizational and technological
4 innovations, as we've heard today. But we know they
5 could be doing so much more if they weren't worrying
6 about the leaky roof, the sump pumps, or the
7 inadequate heat. The philanthropic community has a
8 great interest in supporting the diverse range of
9 program and services offered at the public library.
10 But the basic infrastructure needs to be in place to
11 accommodate the innovative new projects and programs
12 that would attract private investment. I can assure
13 you that every foundation that I know does not
14 believe that it is philanthropy's responsibility to
15 fix leaky roofs, and that is a basic city
16 responsibility. The city must live up to its
17 commitment to equal access to education and
18 opportunity for all. New York City is know
19 throughout the world as a place where dreams are
20 made, and where anything is possible.

22 As the leaders and policymakers of this
23 City, you have the ability to ensure that all New
24 Yorkers have access to the resources they need to
25 make their own American dream come true by supporting

1
2 the desperately needed Capital Plan for the city's
3 public libraries. I want to thank you very
4 opportunity to testify, and to wish you a very happy
5 holiday.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
7 much, and earlier I thanked Center for an Urban
8 Future for their amazing, amazing passion for
9 libraries. But you, too, Julie have been at the
10 table for quite some time now believing in this
11 mission, and helping to support it in so many
12 different ways. So I just want to say thank you
13 because without you, so many other things don't
14 happen in this city domino effect of building up and
15 sustaining the movement for libraries. So really
16 thank you so much.

17 JULIE SANDORF: And thank you for your
18 leadership.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
20 Christian.

21 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: Good afternoon. I
22 would like to thank the Committee on Cultural
23 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
24 relations for inviting me to speak today. My name is
25 Christian Zabriskie, and I'm the Executive Director

1
2 of Urban Librarians Unite, an independent 501(c)(3)
3 not for profit dedicated to libraries and
4 librarianship in urban areas.

5 We've been speaking out about libraries
6 in New York City for more than five years, and we are
7 very excited that capital funding issues are now
8 being addressed. The library directors have provided
9 you with extensive information and facts about the
10 state of repairs needed in libraries across the city.
11 I would like to offer the personal and anecdotal
12 perspective as a library professional, who has been
13 working in libraries here in New York City for eight
14 years. In my day job I am a frontline librarian at
15 one of the three large library systems. I spend all
16 day in libraries serving our community. What does
17 that look like? On a typical day I help between 80
18 and 100 people find anything from a good book to
19 dealing with serious life issues like housing,
20 employment, and family health issues. I have at
21 least 40 kids in my library after school every single
22 day. We are a safe space for these children, and a
23 resource to help them in their studies, and in their
24 lives. I have found homeless teens housing, helped
25 grieving family members who are dealing with

1
2 intestate deaths, and assisted young people to start
3 their own business. This is the work that goes on
4 everyday at libraries across the city. My library is
5 not even a particularly busy one, just to give you a
6 sense of scale.

7 What tools are we given to achieve these
8 results and make this difference in the community?
9 We can work with a variety of books and databases.
10 We can create arts instruction out of found
11 materials. We can create programming out of thin
12 air, and we often do. What we can't work around are
13 the buildings that we work in, and the spaces that we
14 offer our public. I am not here to ask you for
15 lavish new libraries. I am asking for the ones that
16 we have to be put into a state of good repair. While
17 I have been engaged in the work of the library, I
18 have been in spaces where the furnace conked out. I
19 have worked in a library where the leak in the staff
20 men's room, the staff men's room bathroom sent a
21 steady trickle of water down my back. And I've had
22 to move books forward on the shelves to avoid leaks
23 that ran down the wall behind the ranks. This is not
24 hyperbole. This is the reality of my work.

1
2 The lack of a forward thinking capital
3 plan for the library facilities has left all three
4 libraries dependent on the largesse of individuals,
5 City Council Members, just to fix broken furnaces and
6 leaky roofs. This opaque system of cobbled together
7 funds, though much appreciated, has been inadequate
8 to address the capital needs of libraries in our
9 city. To move forward with a new more comprehensive
10 plan, we need an understanding of what has happened
11 in the past. To that end, Urban Librarians Unite is
12 currently creating a report card on the contributions
13 of individual elected officials towards the capital
14 needs of the library. This will be a public
15 document, which will include information on the
16 contributions of all the members of the City Council
17 and the Borough Presidents, including amounts, and if
18 we can find it, what the money was allocated for. We
19 hope that this will provide a new level of
20 transparency, and let the public know where their
21 funds are going. We will make this report card
22 available throughout our website and in a print
23 edition.

24 I look forward to seeing and promoting
25 the great support that the City Council provides to

1
2 libraries now, in the past, and moving forward. I
3 would like to encourage our elected leaders to find a
4 genuine sustainable solution to the capital funding
5 crisis in New York City libraries. The buildings are
6 deteriorating even as this conversation goes, and
7 lots of my colleagues in the city yesterday were
8 complaining of leaky roofs. The work that we do is
9 important. The solutions that we provide are
10 essential, and although we are quiet about it, our
11 impacts can be deafening. We are information first
12 responders serving the people of New York City
13 everyday. Please give us the facilities that we need
14 to serve our public. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much, Christian, and I just want to say I think a
17 report card is something that gets the attention of
18 elected officials. And, I can tell you that from
19 experience that we take note of those things.

20 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: Thank you very
21 much.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I look
23 forward to your report card, and I will go back to my
24 office now and make sure I'm going to get an A on my
25 report card. [audience laughter]

1
2 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: Thank you very
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, with that,
5 we'll have Christabel to close out this panel.

6 CHRISTABEL GOUGH: Thank you so much for
7 holding this really interesting hearing at which many
8 important facts have come out. I'm Christabel Gough
9 from the Society for the Architecture of the City.
10 We're a small all volunteer historic preservation
11 advocacy group, and we are very concerned about
12 libraries. You all heard a great deal of testimony
13 about the services libraries are providing in
14 teaching computer technology and English as a foreign
15 language. Those activities are of great importance
16 and generate capital needs. You must help fund. But
17 in allocating city resources, you should avoid a
18 total transformation of libraries into social service
19 centers without books or librarians or seating at
20 table for readers. Many New Yorkers want those
21 traditional services. I was glad to hear Council
22 Member Lander say something similar. They want to
23 read books, what to talk to a human being, not a
24 computer screen, and they want to sit down and read.

1
2 Earlier this year, I attended a community
3 board meeting at the Red Hook Branch Library
4 concerning a plan to shrink this already tiny
5 library, by turning space over to an outside private
6 arts program called Stage Works. Mothers and
7 grandmothers and little children from the Red Hook
8 Houses with their elected officials including Senator
9 Montgomery who was here earlier, convened to oppose
10 that plan and demand more books. The traditional
11 library is still wanted and needed, and allocating
12 funding for equipment, important book centered
13 traditional services that communities rely on should
14 be one of your main priorities. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much, and I want to thank you all for your patience
17 and dedication in working with us. And Julie, again
18 thank you so much for being the impetus behind so
19 much of what we're experiencing. And Christian,
20 thank you for all of your dedication as well. And
21 Christabel, you have been here before our committee a
22 number of times. So thank you all for everything
23 that you do for libraries. And I look forward to
24 hearing from some of you at the January meeting, and
25

1
2 pushing really hard to get libraries what they really
3 deserve.

4 So thank you and happy holidays to all of
5 you. And I believe there are some folks from the New
6 York Public Library who have come here today, and
7 we're grateful for that. I want to ask several of
8 those folks if they're still with us. I'll call the
9 names, and if you are here, please come forward. It
10 looks like Chancey Fleet, Ms. Chancey Fleet. That is
11 a great name, Chancey Fleet, wouldn't you say?

12 Darius Ramos. Is Darius Ramos still with us? Great.
13 Darius come forward. If you want to take a seat over
14 there, that would be great. Lisa Goldstein, Patricia
15 Kettless. Patricia Kettless, are you with us,
16 Patricia? Please come forward. I think that's
17 Nefertiti Matos. Nefertiti Matos, please come
18 forward, and do I have all the folks? I think that's
19 it, right? Okay. Great. So, I know all of you
20 taking a great time to be here and stay with us
21 because you love libraries. And we're going to go to
22 a timer. We'll do our best we can to do two minutes
23 each, if that's okay. And if you need more time,
24 we'll work with you, but we're just so thrilled
25 you've come today, and you've give us all this time.

1
2 We really, really appreciate it. So I think it's
3 Nefertiti Matos, right?

4 NEFERTITI MATOS: Nefertiti, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why don't we
6 start with you, and then we'll go-- Well, you choose
7 who wants to go next. Thank you all for being here.

8 [pause, background comments]

9 NEFERTITI MATOS: Good afternoon. My
10 name is Nefertiti Matos, and I'm Assistant
11 Technology-- Excuse me. I'm an Assistant Trainer
12 for Assisted Technology at the Andrew Heiskell
13 Library. [sic] Before joining the library staff, I
14 volunteered as a career coach with our computer
15 support team. I teach patrons who have difficulty
16 reading the standard print, everything from basic
17 typing skills to screen reader technology. That
18 makes it possible for people with low or no vision to
19 read computers and mobile devices independently. Our
20 Advanced Technology Workshops, community fairs, study
21 groups, and so much more specifically geared toward
22 taking care of blind or visually impaired. I
23 honestly feel that our branch has become an
24 invaluable resource for a population that would not
25 otherwise have access to these services.

1
2 Ava and Elana are two Latino women who
3 lost their sight later in life. Although, motivator-
4 - or motivated--excuse me--and eager to learn the
5 found most community education programs weren't sure
6 how to support blind Spanish-speakers with accessible
7 technology, materials, or teaching techniques.
8 Luckily, through word of mouth, they became aware of
9 the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library.
10 Since I am a lifelong user of assisted technology
11 myself and a native Spanish speaker, I am able to
12 provide them with what they need. We are currently
13 working on typing, Internet browsing, and downloading
14 of digital books. These basic but essential skills
15 will lay the groundwork for Ava and Elana, and
16 countless other patrons to confidently pursue
17 educational, social, and employment opportunities.
18 It is utmost importance then that we maintain a safe
19 and clean place for assisted learning. And a quiet
20 space where patrons can come together to share ideas,
21 listen to a book, test new technologies, or even
22 lounge through the stacks of great literature
23 breathing in that lovely unique smell unique to only
24 old books.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Keep going.

1

2

NEFERTITI MATOS: [laughs]

3

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very, very
captivating. We want to hear everything that you
said.

6

7

8

9

10

NEFERTITI MATOS: Thank you. I sincerely
hope that you choose to continue investing in the
future of the patrons we serve at the Andrew Heiskell
Braille and Talking Book Library. I appreciate the
time to speak before you today, and I thank you.

11

12

13

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
much. That was amazing. Yes, we can all raise our
hands for that.

14

[audience yelling]

15

16

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, clap.
[applause and laughter]

17

NEFERTITI MATOS: Thank you.

18

19

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That was a very
happy breach of protocol here at the City Council.

20

[laughter] Who wants to go next?

21

CHANCEY FLEET: Can I go next?

22

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

23

[background comments]

24

25

CHANCEY FLEET: Oh, now I do. Okay. I'm
Chancey Fleet, and I coordinate Assisted Technology

1 Services at the Andrew Heiskell Branch of the NYPL.

2 I joined the staff just in April, and previously

3 founded and volunteered in our Computer Support

4 Clinic. At our branch, people living with

5 disabilities use and learn technologies that empower

6 us to accomplish our goals. In 2010, when I was a

7 patron and not a worker, I approached our branch to

8 ask for space to host a clinic whereby visually

9 impaired people could share strategies for using

10 technology. My fellow volunteers and I were welcomed

11 on Saturday to use a small private room. If anyone

12 on the committee is curious about why blind computer

13 users need a private space with a closed door, just

14 try reading a book sometime while you're sitting

15 right next to a talking computer.

16 Our clinic was started by volunteers who

17 had a lot of motivation and expertise, but absolutely

18 no budget. So, having a space, a free and

19 appropriate space to meet was critical to us. And

20 just one second. Come back notes. [laughter] Okay,

21 five years since we started that clinic, technology

22 programs at Andrew Heiskell have grown. Last month

23 47 patrons received 80 hours of one-on-one tech

24 coaching. We now offer workshops in accessible tech

25

1
2 topics. For example, web resources for exploring our
3 complex city from transit directions to concert
4 calendars to the app for 311. In the fall, our
5 Technology, Culture and Community Fair brought
6 hundreds of patrons together to learn network and
7 explore accessible culture with representatives of
8 the Met, Lincoln Center and 32 other community
9 partners and accessibility. Our space is used to the
10 fullest by patron powered programs, and/or a history
11 project, a new Braille study group, and an expanded
12 tech clinic where people with disabilities help each
13 other to cross the digital divide.

14 Recently, a stylist with dyslexia came to
15 us wanting to know how to set up a spreadsheet to
16 track her commissions. A sixth grader came to figure
17 out how to do his math homework on a computer with
18 Braille. And an older adult came to learn how to
19 email her family on an iPad. And she had limited use
20 of her hands, she figured with our volunteers that
21 the easiest way to do that would be to send a video
22 message. The goal changes. New goals are set and
23 met everyday, but what remains the same is that we
24 need two things to make this type of programming
25 work. People with disabilities need each other, and

1
2 we need a space of the kind that the New York Public
3 Library provides. Thank you for helping-- Thank you
4 for funding the building that helps us build our
5 independence, our self-reliance, our skills, and our
6 futures. Thanks. [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Even the
8 Sergeant-at-Arms is very happy with that display of
9 emotion. [laughter] So thank you so much. That was
10 amazing and a very, very powerful testimony about the
11 importance of that particular space, and our library
12 spaces. So I'm not sure anyone really wants to
13 follow that, but [laughter] you in the middle with
14 the green shirt. I think you're up.

15 BARRY SCHRAMOS: Hello, my name is Barry
16 Schramos [sp?] and I represent that Stapleton Branch
17 on Staten Island. I'm a patron there, and with that,
18 the Stapleton Library is an incredibly beautiful
19 building. The original landmark was conjoined with a
20 state-of-the-art atrium like addition. I call it the
21 jewel of the neighborhood, and Downtown Staten
22 Island. The Stapleton Library is a beacon of hope
23 for education and many other things in a struggling
24 neighborhood, which is looking to find its identity.
25 What makes this branch stand out above the rest is

1
2 Stapleton's staff. For me, it's something I see
3 almost on a regular day-to-day basis. There are
4 besides the many adults to log onto the computers and
5 the video drones at the DVD section, and lots of the
6 finest, and let's not forget, the foremost the books.
7 The books that we read. Excuse me.

8 There are many children who are
9 constantly and visually being looked after and cared
10 for by the Stapleton staff. The effort and the care
11 that is put in those young ones is a priceless and
12 selfless deed, which the staff should surely be
13 commended and applauded for. Let's just say without
14 going much further that the Stapleton Library is the
15 jewel of the neighborhood, and a safe haven away from
16 its tough street. When Andrew Carnegie left his
17 incredible great legacy for the American public, it
18 really was about the children. The Stapleton Library
19 represents that. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
21 much. [applause, laughter] You know, in looking at
22 your written testimony, it appears that you wrote
23 that long hand, which is very impressive. Nobody
24 does that any more.

1
2 BARRY SCHRAMOS: Well, when you're
3 technologically inadequate.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, no, it's--
5 it's great. I love it. I love a little bit of the
6 new technology. And you brought the old school,
7 right? You brought the old school a little bit,
8 which is all kind of fun. So, I thank you for being
9 here today, and to hear about Stapleton, which is an
10 important, important place. And last but not least,
11 Patricia.

12 PATRICIA KETTLES: Hello, my name is
13 Patricia Kettles, but I'm known as Patty. I am the
14 Manager of the Port Richmond Branch located in Staten
15 Island, New York.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Staten Island is
17 coming in strong today.

18 PATRICIA KETTLES: Yes, yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I like that.

20 PATRICIA KETTLES: When you walk into my
21 public library, you will find a very welcoming and
22 warm environment. We offer English classes in my
23 branch, resume workshops; as well as computer
24 classes; toddler time; story time both in English and
25 Spanish. And I am fortunate enough to have an out-

1
2 of-school-time program where we tutor elementary
3 students everyday after school. With that said, all
4 the wonderful things we're able to do in our branch
5 as of right now, I don't know how much longer we'll
6 be able to provide this because my building is one of
7 the Carnegie buildings. I will be celebrating its
8 110th Anniversary in March. My building is falling
9 apart. It is being held together with band-aids.
10 Over the years-- I have been in the library system
11 for over 18 years, and over the years we have been
12 left with some city funding where we can fix either
13 the children's room or the HVAC system.

14 These repairs that need to be-- In my
15 building need to happen today. I have a pipe that
16 has burst two times in the last three months that's
17 109 years old. We don't have the capital money to be
18 able to replace all the piping. So it's patchwork.
19 So I'm waiting for that pipe to burst again, which
20 leaves us with no hot water in the building. So
21 then, we also have to close. I have a ceiling that
22 has fallen multiple times in the children's room
23 where we patch up and repaint. But then because of
24 the water conditions, we have problems with our roof
25 and our foundation throughout the building. I know

1
2 that it's going to fall down again. The same as my
3 reference room. Part of my ceiling is falling down.
4 What is unique to the Port Richmond Library because
5 it being a Carnegie building is I have a WPA theater,
6 one of the few in the city. It's in decent
7 condition. However, for the next 100 years, we need
8 to upgrade the system of the technology within the
9 theater. I also have under-utilized spaces in my
10 branch. If I am able to get renovated and able to
11 get the capital money that is needed, I'd be able to
12 have an adult learning center when we would have
13 computer labs. And also a teen center, a teen zone.
14 I'm in a high-risk community, and it's essential that
15 these services are available to my community.

16 I also, on a personal note, I'm a native
17 New Yorker. I'm a native Staten Islander. When I
18 was a child, and it wasn't until I became a manager
19 that I realized that as a child I performed on that
20 stage because I went to theater groups like the
21 Cromwell Center. I also was a child that could not
22 read until the fourth grade. My family did not have
23 a lot of money. We went to the library. I have been
24 using the library since I was a baby, and my family
25 has. It's essential that this gets-- that these

1
2 capital projects-- Because I've seen it across the
3 system. We really, really need this capital money so
4 that we can help the communities that we're in.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
7 much. [applause] I just want to say someone asked
8 me earlier today when I went for a break, how I can
9 do this, right? We're three and a half hours into
10 this testimony, and we have many more speakers to go.
11 I said, number one, it's my job. But this panel just
12 remind me of why we do this, and this panel has been
13 inspiring and uplifting. And from work or anything
14 that is less than deeply moving. So thank you for
15 reminding all of us here in this very, very special
16 chambers why we have libraries, why we are here
17 today, and what it's so important to fund our
18 libraries appropriately. So I want to thank the New
19 York Public Library for doing an amazing job of
20 lining up the four most impressive speakers ever in
21 the history of the City Council apparently.
22 [laughter] And, making all this so worthwhile. So
23 I'm grateful that we have the libraries and the
24 programs and the services that are making the
25 difference in the lives of the four of you. And,

1
2 together we will make sure we are doing that work for
3 many years to come. So thank you to this panel, and
4 now we're going to move onto the next panel as well.
5 Thank you so much.

6 PATRICIA KETTLES: Thank you.

7 CHANCEY FLEET: Thank you so much.

8 [pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, we have--
10 I'm not sure we have you. No, we don't.

11 [pause]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So now we are
13 going to call the next panel. We are going to go to
14 a two-minute time limit. We simply have to as a
15 result of approaching four hours here. I think we're
16 going to hear from Ramon Acevedo. Is Ramon Acevedo
17 here? Charles Warren. Charles Warren? Oh, not
18 because you came up, but I--- Veronica Conant and
19 Elizabeth Brown, Elizabeth A.R. Brown. Is Elizabeth
20 here? Yes. All right, so that's the next panel, and
21 I apologize, but we are forced to go to a timer. We
22 have several more speakers as well. So why don't we-

23 -

24 RAMON ACEVEDO: Thank you, sir.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ramon, you were
3 called first. Would you like to go first, or would
4 you like to offer Elizabeth first?

5 RAMON ACEVEDO: Ladies first.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Elizabeth, why
7 don't you start with your testimony, and then we'll
8 go to Veronica and hit the guys later. Okay.

9 ELIZABETH BROWN: Could we ask Mr. Warren
10 to speak first?

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Take a vote
12 amongst yourselves.

13 CHARLES WARREN: That's fine, if everyone
14 can hear me. I just want to point out that my
15 testimony was invited, and Amita told me I would have
16 ten minutes to testify.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think it's--
18 Your mic is not on--

19 CHARLES WARREN: [interposing] Sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and I
21 apologize, but--

22 CHARLES WARREN: It's red. I think you
23 can-- Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now, I can.

25 CHARLES WARREN: Good.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But we are going
3 to be-- We have to go to the time limit. So please
4 condense your testimony as much as you can.

5 CHARLES WARREN: I'm Charles Warren. I
6 represent that Community to Save the New York Public
7 Library, a citizen's group that has sought to keep
8 the popular Mid-Manhattan Branches of the Library
9 rather than a real estate deal. Keep three million
10 books in the stacks of the Central Library at 42nd
11 Street, and maintain the Science, Industry and
12 Business Library, the closest library to the CUNY
13 Graduate Center at 34th Street. To the citizens of
14 New York it seems that a \$151 million contribution to
15 the New York-- to the Central Library Plan was coming
16 from thin air, \$100 million from the Mayor, \$50
17 million from the City Council, and \$1 million from
18 the Manhattan Borough President. This money was
19 granted when NYPL claimed it did not yet have even
20 schematic designs. There were no public hearings.
21 There was no public input. Now, most of the sum
22 remains in the adopted Fiscal 2015 Budget. What is
23 it for?

24 The NYPL Midtown campus includes the
25 Central Library at 42nd Street and the Mid-Manhattan

1
2 branch, but it fails to mention the Science,
3 Industry, and Business Library just a few blocks
4 away. Will the City Council follow the old pattern
5 where it grants \$151 million for a vaguely described
6 plan being developed in secrete. We need to know
7 what our tax dollars are paying for. We not stand
8 for a partnership where the money is public, and the
9 decisions are private.

10 Just last week, NYPL conducted a survey
11 about plans for the Midtown campus, but the survey
12 omitted key questions. It did not ask, Does it make
13 sense to leave the stacks empty for want of air
14 conditioning? Which Midtown Campus building is best
15 suited to which library service? Should several be
16 sold, or made part of the Midtown Campus. What
17 balance should we strike between books and electronic
18 services? [bell] Shall I go on?

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Your testimony
20 is quite extensive, and I appreciate that, and you
21 have testified before us before. I can assure you
22 that we will go through this, every word. But I
23 would ask you to wrap up so we can go to some of the
24 other colleagues on the panel. I suspect some of
25

1
2 your colleagues on the panel may voice some very
3 similar comments.

4 CHARLES WARREN: I doubt it very much.
5 I'm sorry, but you had invited me to testify, and you
6 Counsel told me I would have ten minutes so please--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
8 And Mr. Warren, honestly, I believe it may be a
9 little bit of a disagreement in terms of how much
10 time you were promised. I don't appreciate you going
11 after the staff of this committee. I've asked you to
12 sum up your testimony, and request that you do so.

13 CHARLES WARREN: We urge the following
14 reforms:

15 Make increased and long-term capital
16 funding contingent on greater openness and better
17 oversight of NYPL.

18 Require advanced notice and periods of
19 public comment on NYPL capital expenditures whether
20 funded by New York City or privately by NYPL.

21 Reform passed through contracts to
22 provide better oversight and transparency.

23 Use the government's three appointed
24 representatives a conduit of information between NYPL
25 trustees and the public.

1
2 Require a quarter public report from a
3 scrupulous representative providing independent
4 account of NYPL plans.

5 Require the disclose of all information
6 presented at NPPL trustee meetings. We attend those
7 meetings, and they supply their trustees with books
8 that are hidden from public view, and contain crucial
9 information.

10 Require disclosure of past cost-estimates
11 relating to the Central Library Plan.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
13 much, and I think now we'll hear from Elizabeth
14 Brown.

15 ELIZABETH BROWN: Thank you. Decisions
16 concerning the future of the libraries of New York
17 City must be made with intensive consultation of the
18 public, and meaningful representation of the public
19 on the boards that make the decisions. Financial
20 support is critical to the operation of libraries,
21 and I am very surprised today that nobody has
22 mentioned the fiasco of the Donnell Library or the
23 sale of Kindred Spirits. Once rights are sold, they
24 are gone. In keeping with the public mission of
25 libraries' activities and the library-- The

1
2 libraries' activities and finances should be
3 absolutely transparent to the public. It's
4 occasionally argued that private donations are
5 somehow different from public funds, and that
6 libraries do not have to be accountable for them. I
7 wish every penny I donate I hope is publicly
8 accounted for. We all know that money is fungible.
9 Not only this, since money that is privately donated
10 is publicly tax deductible, and in that sense public.

11 I think that public contributions would
12 be far more forthcoming if the library's finances,
13 and bases for their policy decisions were fully and
14 publicly disclosed. And if truly representative
15 members of the public participated in those
16 decisions. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much for coming in under time. Veronica.

19 VERONICA CONANT: [off mic]

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's not how
21 it works, Veronica, but we are going to ask you-- We
22 are going to ask you to start your testimony, and
23 then you will have two minutes as well. And Veronica
24 we've met many times before.

1
2 VERONICA CONANT: I know we've met many
3 times, but this is now something out. It isn't that-
4 - I'm not repeating or I hope, but unfortunately
5 there isn't much time to say it. Yes, well, our
6 priorities are-- I'm a member of-- I'm a retired
7 librarian, and a member of the Committee to Save the
8 New York Public Library. You have a copy of my
9 testimony, and I'm changing it because I want to
10 stress some other points for me that I think that are
11 important, and my community will have in community
12 needs. The \$151 million, which Charles mentioned for
13 the New York Public Library I hope that this are
14 keeping our book stacks in the 42nd Street Library.
15 I hope this will mean that it's going to be news for
16 updating the existing air conditioning and the
17 sprinkler system, and moving back the three million
18 volumes to that location as soon as possible. It is
19 not a large amount. I give the details in my
20 testimony as I do also for the Bryant Park staircase
21 extension, which is under Bryant Park and compare it
22 to recap. [sic] And I really would like to ask you
23 here we need a cost benefit evaluation, analysis or
24 recap versus carrying-- keeping 6.7 million books at
25

1
2 the location of the 42nd street. So that's where I'm
3 going.

4 The second thing is everybody is talking
5 about not putting in our computers. We've seen from
6 the other guys' report of the Urban Future of, you
7 know, the center is a wonderful library which has
8 lots and lots of computers. It is the Science,
9 Industry and Business Library at 34th Street and
10 Madison, which was built only in 1996 for \$100
11 million. A huge expense equipped with hundreds of
12 computers, everything. We support the computers and
13 please do not sell it, and do not sell the public
14 libraries. Otherwise, Andrew Carnegie donated in
15 1905 his millions toward the building of libraries.
16 [bell] I just would like to finish this sentence. He
17 did it on the condition that he pays the buildings,
18 but then the city pays for the utilities, and if
19 there is a rental [sic], and maintains those
20 buildings in perpetuity. This was in 1905. Over the
21 decades, this has really-- This has been forgotten,
22 and it is time for us to remember, and reinstate this
23 very important-- And I just would like to read the
24 end of my--

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

No, you said that was your last sentence.

VERONICA CONANT: The agreement hasn't yet because the agreement has not been kept for decades. There is a great deal of deferred maintenance built into major capital needs having a baseline capital funding established for regular preventive maintenance whatever is stated for the regulation current and pre-existing. And would be much more cost-effective and benefit all.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much.

VERONICA CONANT: Okay. The rest of it unfortunately I have no time, but I hope that you will read what I have--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
You made the most of your time. You got a lot in there.

VERONICA CONANT: Yes, I always do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So let's give Ramon Acevedo.

RAMON ACEVEDO: Yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Back to Brooklyn.

1
2 RAMON ACEVEDO: Yes. I live in Brooklyn.
3 I'm from Sunset Park, a lifelong resident. I have
4 attended that library since I was a child. I still
5 attend the library. I was formerly the chairman--

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
7 Please raise your hands for yourself and just go--

8 RAMON ACEVEDO: [laughs] I was going to
9 clap at the end. Okay. All right, I was the former
10 Chairman of the Sunset Park Education Coalition. We
11 banded together so we could build more schools in our
12 neighborhood because our neighborhood was
13 overcrowded. We were successful. We had two new
14 schools built. We're in a situation where we're
15 still overcrowded. So we're fighting again to get a
16 new school built in our neighborhood. Okay, we now
17 are focusing also on our libraries, and I would like
18 to read a couple of things from people who nominated
19 their libraries, okay. I have to do it fast, okay.

20 I live in a homeless shelter and this
21 branch provides services to my children and myself.
22 We are able to check out reading materials-- I'm
23 sorry. We were able to check out reading materials
24 and DVDs as well. Searching for work is--I'm losing
25 my place here--hard, but the branch provides free

1
2 wireless service. So I'm able to search for jobs.
3 My children are kept off the street and in the
4 library where they're safe. This other person was a
5 victim of a domestic violence case, and she used the
6 library to keep herself and her children safe, away
7 from being abused. There is a woman here who is a
8 young woman who gave birth, and she was unwed and
9 unemployed. She was unable to pay for college, so
10 she would go to the library where the staff helped
11 her get her GED, and then continue with her life.

12 Our libraries are very important. It's
13 not just a library. It's not just a place for books.
14 If you want to talk about social media, the library
15 is the original social media. What we need to do is
16 not sell our libraries, because we need them for our
17 future in case we have to expand them. Okay, instead
18 of giving up our airspace. We can put affordable
19 housing in a different location, and we need to keep
20 our libraries safe, independent and unencumbered.
21 Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much, Mr. Acevedo. Thank you very much to this
24 panel, and we have four more speakers, I believe.
25 Thank you, Veronica.

1

2

[background comments]

3

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

4

Thank you so much. So our final panel I believe--

5

Is C. M. Pyle still here? C. M. Pyle? Yes, we've

6

met many times before. Jacob Morris. Is Jacob

7

Morris-- Jacob Morris? Oh, Yuki Endo [sp?] Is Yuki

8

Endo--? Yes, Yuki Endo, and Michael White. The four

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of you are the final four. Again, we will be on the

10

clock, and maybe we'll have Ms. Pyle go first, and

11

the work our way down--

12

[background comments]

13

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What is your

14

name?

15

[background comments]

16

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Lucy Cotine

17

[sp?].

18

[pause, background comments]

19

C. M. PYLE: Chairman Van Bramer,

20

Chairman Constantinides, members of the City Council,

21

thank you for having this hearing. How have our

22

libraries, and other cultural institutions including

23

universities fallen into the hands of those trustees,

24

no doubt well meaning, who never use libraries? When

25

they seldom have time away from their financial

1
2 concerns to read books on culture and thought. Whose
3 primary interests and work are in management,
4 finances, and real estate development. Who may have
5 little or no time or inclination for intellectual
6 life. How has the running of intellectual resources
7 become the province of charming people who earn
8 fabulous sums of money by converting our cultural
9 institutions into venues for concomitantly fabulous
10 parties and other fundraising events? Were these not
11 once the problems of our city's government? Were
12 these not once the problems of our city's government?
13 I think of the remarkable school and university
14 system of before and after World War II, which so
15 many of us profited from. I think of the equally
16 remarkable library system of the same period. Again,
17 a hugely democratic, but also and because
18 professionally run benefit of living in and paying
19 taxes to New York City. Surely the famed anti-
20 intellectualism engrained in this country is partly
21 responsible, as is the emphasis of recent decades on
22 monetary values over ethical or educational values.
23 The natural sciences are still somewhat respected
24 probably for utilitarian reasons. Excuse me. And I
25 have said before in these hearings that scholarship

1
2 is the science of the humanities, and that libraries
3 are the laboratories of scholarship. I even publish
4 on these topics in the context of intellectual
5 history. Yet, scholars and increasing new sciences
6 are not being included in the administrative makeup
7 of formerly great cultural institutions including the
8 main research branch of the New York Public Library
9 at 42nd Street. Managers with mere MBA degrees are.
10 There are degrees in manipulation, manipulation of
11 facts and manipulation of fancies. But above all,
12 manipulation of people in order to extract monies
13 from wealthy, but often, not highly educated, and
14 often anti-intellectual donors.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
16 Ms. Pyle, I appreciate your testimony--

17 C. M. PYLE: I then would like to
18 emphasize the role-- the importance of books in
19 libraries, which I do in the end of my testimony.
20 Books are the root of libraries.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I am a big lover
22 of the printed books as well, and so I am with you on
23 that. I appreciate it. You've been before our
24 committee many, many times. So thank you so much for
25

1
2 that, and I do want to go right to left. Then
3 Michael will be next. Michael, you're up.

4 MICHAEL WHITE: Okay. I'm Michael White,
5 Citizens Defending Libraries. Libraries have had
6 hundreds, in fact, thousands of years to get what
7 they do right. They're full of people and the
8 libraries in New York are a success story. You don't
9 need to slap a glass window onto them to see that.
10 The ideas, experimentation, that's okay. But it's
11 potentially extremely foolish, and financially
12 wasteful to rush to overhaul with redevelopment deals
13 all of our libraries, all at once, shutting down any
14 chance for the public to react to the changes and
15 increasing the danger of from ill-considered facts.

16 There are already identifiable problems.
17 Basement libraries in mixed-use developments usually
18 vastly shrink from libraries with the first
19 initiative we've seen are perpetually sentenced to go
20 no further. Which Ray Acevedo mentioned, while
21 departing from the tradition in architecture of
22 having libraries architecturally declare themselves
23 as important in and of themselves and beacons to our
24 community. Promoted somewhat deceptively as
25 economically redeveloping libraries, it's frequently

1
2 the opposite, far from cheap and with must to be
3 lost. Selling and vastly shrinking the beloved
4 Donnell Library netted less than \$38 million. If it
5 had been built full scale, they would have lost money
6 on that.

7 Similarly, the self-cannibalizing
8 [sic]sale of the Brooklyn Heights Library is proposed
9 to raise funds, but we can only think that the very
10 tiny size that they're proposing to make is
11 essentially the same as what is proposed for Sunset
12 Park now. It is because otherwise a bigger library,
13 the uneconomic character of the library say would be
14 blatantly clear to everyone. I have more in my
15 written testimony including what would make more
16 sense in terms of developing libraries including the
17 suggestion about a revolving fund. And I'm wary
18 about making any suggestions until the mindset of the
19 people seeking to redevelop libraries has changes.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
21 much, Michael. It is an extensive packet. I have
22 that. I see your comments on the Sunset Park
23 Library, which I find very interesting. And we will
24 obviously continue the dialogue. Next.

1
2 LUCY COTINE: Hi, sorry. I couldn't
3 refuse a few comments. So sitting here today and
4 haring that the word of the day is flexible. We
5 cannot forget flexible. Libraries need to be
6 flexible, and you say it enough times, and we will
7 all believe it. It is true and it is necessary. I
8 think Ms. Johnson must have used it at least ten
9 times in the first few minutes of her testimony.
10 Libraries should be seen as worthy to stand alone.
11 The message to the population needs to be that
12 libraries with all the multiple functions that they
13 serve deserve to stand alone. They are important.
14 They hold our books, our knowledge, and many
15 resources for our people to advance themselves. Our
16 libraries need to be finances to the degree that will
17 ensure capital and operational needs, which includes
18 the expansions as well when they are needed.
19 Libraries count.

20 They are not addendums to high-rises or
21 dance studios. Planned neglect through under-funding
22 should not be used as an excuse to fulfill the
23 desires and the dreams of the salivating real estate
24 interests. And In think that's what we have been
25 seeing. Certainly, the sale of the Brooklyn Heights

1
2 Library is the epitome of that, and without the
3 library executives making any real effort or attempt
4 to get around the selling of that library, that's the
5 first thing they have gone to. And it's been in the
6 plans for many years. So I guess my feeling is that
7 libraries do not need to be so flexible that we turn
8 them into these gymnasts that are after thoughts to a
9 high-rise. And I don't know what message it gives to
10 people when they have to walk past doormen and past
11 wealthy people to enter the public space that is the
12 library. [bell] So thank you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for
14 coming, and right at two minutes. Very impressive
15 and I appreciate your testimony. I remember you from
16 your past testimonies as well. Mr. Morris.

17 JACOB MORRIS: Hello, Mr. Chairman.
18 You've heard me testify before. Maybe you remember
19 my testimony in March of 2011 where I raised the
20 possibility of doing an economic impact study of
21 libraries here in New York City. I found that we
22 disagree in regards to can the economic impact of
23 libraries be measured. I want you to rethink
24 statements that were made that you don't believe that
25 the economic impact of the libraries can be measured.

1
2 Just this afternoon in remarks that you personally
3 made about an entrepreneurial award that was given
4 for a restaurant that you enjoy. That's economic
5 impact. That's a successful business enterprise, and
6 over and over again multiple people have testified
7 about printing resumes, job search. The fact is that
8 libraries bring to our economy to changing lives, to
9 helping people. What are libraries? What is the
10 role of libraries in society? On that I feel we do
11 agree, and I feel that your ultimate objective, and
12 you've sponsored a major piece of legislation calling
13 for baseline funding for libraries. And so, I'm
14 going to say to you that if you're committee calls
15 for let's say the Center for an Urban Future to do an
16 economic impact study of what the libraries bring to
17 New York City that it will help you pass that
18 baseline funding legislation, and help justify [bell]
19 ongoing adequate capital funding for our libraries in
20 New York City. And give us the library system that
21 our society needs.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much, Mr. Morris. And I want to say I think we're
24 actually far more closely aligned than you think.
25 Because when I say that it's impossible to adequately

1
2 recognize the numerical value of libraries, I
3 actually think you would probably agree with my
4 statement that there is a young child somewhere in
5 Brooklyn or Queens or Staten Island, or the Bronx or
6 Manhattan. And they walked into a library and they
7 feel a book for the first time in lives, and they
8 take those books home like I did as a five-year-old
9 with the Broadway Branch Library in Astoria. And
10 fall in love with reading, and then they go on to do
11 good in school and first and second and third grade.
12 And they go back to that library time after time and
13 take books out. They become lifelong readers,
14 appreciators of the printed word like Ms. Powell
15 there. How do you put a value that. Like how do you
16 put a dollar value on that? It's impossible because
17 the truth is it's priceless. It's absolutely
18 priceless. So I agree with you that studying the
19 economic output and input of libraries is really
20 important. It would be great to be able to come up
21 with a number. All I'm saying is that whatever that
22 number was, and however you estimated it to be
23 whether it's \$6 billion or \$20 billion or \$100 billion,
24 it still doesn't ever speak to that moment of when a
25 child first goes into a library and falls in love

1
2 with a book. And experiences the joy of libraries,
3 becomes a lifelong learner, becomes the first person
4 in their family to go to college like me. That
5 happened because I went to the Broadway Library and I
6 got my library card. You can't put a dollar value on
7 that. So actually we agree right? Not disagree.

8 JACOB MORRIS: Well, we agree about that.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we're not--
10 - we're not short changing the value of that--

11 JACOB MORRIS: [interposing] And by the
12 way, I grew up on Ditmars.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh.

14 JACOB MORRIS: I went to 31st Street
15 Library. [laughs]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You and Costa
17 went to the library at the same place.

18 JACOB MORRIS: [interposing] Right, I
19 started-- I started with Dr. Doolittle and went
20 through Issac Asimov, and boom.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I could go
22 through the list of all my favorite books as well,
23 but--

24 JACOB MORRIS: [interposing] And that was
25 the old library before the Lindsay Box. [laughs]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, and the
3 Steinway Branch, yes. So, thank you very much. I
4 think we're in agreement broadly speaking, and I
5 appreciate your comments and your testimony. So the
6 final speaker of the day. Thank you very much. Go
7 for it.

8 YUKI ENDO: My name is Yuki Endo. I am
9 just with Citizens Defending Libraries. I support
10 libraries, and I would like to explore every public
11 library including in every borough. I do not support
12 New York Public Library for company's business
13 library for the company library. Because what
14 happens when you enter for the public library are
15 closed for probably on Sunday when most New York
16 libraries are closed. New Yorkers do not go to room
17 just to pick up DVDs or the books. Of course, this
18 municipal new division because the library is small.
19 The new library has a lot of space is for everyone
20 not the municipal or business library because the
21 business library would be relocated at the central
22 library, and that is the beginning. I hope that in
23 using the numbers it is the beginning. But because
24 we weren't adding in Westchester having this
25 wonderful service, we just cut up the book and went

1
2 on this care mission. I do not want the New York
3 City Library to end up like the [bell] public library
4 in the Suffolk County [sic] which is only open
5 Thursday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

6 Thank you. [sic]

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much Yuki for your testimony. Thank you very much to
9 this panel, to all the folks who have been here for
10 over four hours. I appreciate your support for
11 libraries, and while we may not always agree on every
12 single aspects, Mr. Morris, on how we support
13 libraries, what I don't doubt is that we all share a
14 great passion for our public libraries and want them
15 to be as strong as possible So thank you all so very
16 much.

17 JACOB MORRIS: That really came through
18 more than ever.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much.

21 JACOB MORRIS: I mean it personally, Mr.
22 Chairman.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, thank
24 you, and with that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank
25 you. [gavel]

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 16, 2013