



# Mayor Melvin Carter's 2022 Library Budget Address

Thursday, August 19, 2021

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To our Saint Paul Public Library Board, city staff members on Team Saint Paul, partners, supporters, and all those in our community watching, thank you for joining us virtually today for my 2022 Library Budget Address.

To our Library workers - thank you for your tireless commitment as you've served our community in the face of unprecedented challenges over the past year and a half.

Your creative efforts in support of neighbors across our city are what makes our Saint Paul Public Libraries among the best in the world.

As we continue to move through this pandemic and look toward reconnecting with each other in our public spaces, we need time and places to process, heal, transform, and find joy with one another.

Because our libraries create neighborhood spaces for connection, curiosity, discovery, and a sense of belonging, they will continue to play a vital role in this process.

Whether you're a member of our community seeking a place to work, study, or meet, a job seeker looking for Wi-fi or resume support, or a young person looking for the opportunity to discover and learn through play, our libraries have something for every one of us.

While last year's budget reflected the many uncertainties we faced at the time, my 2022 Library Budget proposal leverages the enormous potential of this moment in support of our shared vision for revitalization and sustainability as we rebuild for our future.

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It furthers our vision for a Saint Paul that works for all of us that my Administration has been engaged with in our community these past four years.

Over the past several years, our Saint Paul Public Library has been engaging community members to understand our community's wants, needs, and dreams.

Thousands in our community have completed surveys or participated in interviews.

More than 100 have attended in-person neighborhood forums, with others writing letters or testifying in support of investing in our libraries.

We have heard loud and clear that our neighbors want investments that ensure our libraries remain accessible, safe, inviting, affirming, and comfortable spaces for all of us.

Because of your engagement and support, we've been able to transform our Saint Paul Public Libraries.

We've gone fine free, we've added Read Brave, and we have enlisted the support of social workers to help, right on the ground in our libraries, some of our patrons and users in communities navigate the challenges they face in real time.

Because of the challenges created by the pandemic, my 2021 budget proposal scaled back city services in ways we never would have imagined – including in our libraries.

While we have work to do to fully emerge from this pandemic, my 2022 Library Budget Proposal restores library hours and staffing to ensure all our neighbors have the access to the libraries they want and need right in their neighborhoods.

As our Libraries team has engaged with our community, we have also heard that our facilities present an array of opportunities for revitalization and re-envisioning.

While all of our library buildings are well-loved and well-used, some are also well-worn and could benefit from reinvestment.

The transformation of our Hamline Midway Library is one such opportunity.

My 2022 proposal includes a new five year strategy for our Capital Improvement Budget that

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supports our ability to launch this process for our Hamline Midway Library with an \$8.1 million investment over the next two years.

This proposal supports our ability to explore two unique and impactful options with our community including the renovation and expansion of our existing building or the development of a new one.

These two possibilities emerged from engaging with the many voices of our community.

That's why, as this process moves forward, it will be critical that all of us remain engaged in conversations to help shape the future of this library.

Fortunately, I know our neighbors are up to the task in helping shape this vital investment to benefit our Midway neighborhood, and our entire community both now, and for our children and grandchildren.

With the delivery of my 2022 Library Budget Proposal, our City Council will now start their process of working toward adopting our 2022 city budget.

As this process moves forward, I encourage every member of our community to engage with our Council this fall to ensure all our voices are heard as we work toward revitalization, sustainability and rebuilding for our future.

Thank you again to our Library staff on Team Saint Paul, our Library Board, and all those in our community who share our unwavering commitment to strong, resilient and sustainable Saint Paul Public Libraries.

As we work together to leverage the enormous potential of this moment, I look forward to continuing to be your teammate in shaping the future of Saint Paul.

Stay safe, get your vaccine, keep your mask on, and I can't wait to see you soon in our Saint Paul Public Libraries.