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SPECIAL REPORT | MAY 2017

TIME TO RENEW

UPDATE ON THE **\$1 BILLION** MAINTENANCE CRISIS IN OUR LIBRARIES



New York
Public
Library



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TIME TO RENEW

UPDATE ON THE **\$1 BILLION** MAINTENANCE CRISIS IN OUR LIBRARIES

Two years ago, New York City's three library systems released a report detailing the staggering infrastructure crisis in our branches. **Today, this \$1.1 billion crisis is far from over.** While much progress has been made across our 216 branches thanks to the leadership of the Mayor and City Council, there is more to be done. From failing building infrastructure to malfunctioning mechanical systems and outdated technology, the list of critical needs in our libraries grows daily.

More than a century ago, New York City entered into a pact with philanthropist Andrew Carnegie to build a library within walking distance of every New Yorker. Carnegie provided the funding for the buildings and the City agreed to pay for maintenance and operating costs. It is of critical importance that the City renew this historic commitment to libraries, and in so doing, renew its commitment to serving all New Yorkers.

Over the past two years, with the City's restoration and baselining of \$43 million in operating funding, New York City's public libraries were able to secure and sustain 6-day service across all locations. In addition, the City committed to an initial \$300 million capital infusion. **These investments were crucial, but we must go further.** The fact is that libraries are stretched thin—moreover, the City's initial capital funding commitment has been earmarked for a specific set of projects, while pressing needs for infrastructure updates and repairs continue to grow.

INCREASED FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES

In these critical times, there is no doubt that libraries are more important than ever. Yet, offering free access to education, knowledge, and opportunity to all New Yorkers only works if our libraries are operating in safe, inviting buildings—and if we are open at the times New Yorkers need us most. **Therefore, it is of vital importance to increase capital and operating funding for our 216 public libraries in the FY18 budget.** The city's three library systems are struggling to maintain branches that have gone years without critical infrastructural upkeep—even as they expand programs and services to meet growing needs.

This is unacceptable. Buildings plagued by failing HVAC systems, cramped spaces, and overloaded electrical panels simply cannot adequately host the high-quality services that New Yorkers of all ages deserve. Indeed, it is a challenge to serve all New Yorkers when visitors to a branch must endure the stench of chronic mold and mildew resulting from decades of flooding, or when librarians must cover in-demand children's computers with plastic sheets on rainy days because of leaky ceilings.

FY18 BUDGET REQUEST

- **\$150 Million for Critical Maintenance Needs:**

- Chronic Roof Leaks
- Overloaded Circuits
- Faulty Air Conditioners
- Severe Overcrowding
- Chronic Flooding & Mildew
- Inaccessible & Inhospitable Spaces
- Insufficient Heat
- Water Damage
- Broken Elevators
- Inadequate Program Space

- **\$34 Million for 7-Day Service in Every District**



As libraries continue to develop additional programs and services to engage more patrons than ever, they must ensure that they can accommodate those patrons in safe, welcoming facilities. But when a branch's lone program space is only accessible via a dark stairwell or a dilapidated lift, its reach does not extend to all those who would benefit. Or, if a cold day means patrons cannot access what they need without a coat because the boilers are outdated, then our libraries cannot live up to their mission to improve lives and strengthen communities.

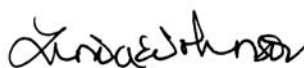
It is therefore imperative that the City honor its commitment to Andrew Carnegie—and to the 40 million visitors to our branches each year. **We ask that the City allocate \$150 million in capital funding in FY18 for critical maintenance needs.** Without the capacity to address crucial infrastructure needs, even our ability to offer basic internet and computer services becomes fraught—just as our city's libraries are being called on to meet the increasingly digital demands of our users.

With free access to learning opportunities and information, libraries have the potential to open doors and change lives—but they can only do that if their doors are open when New Yorkers need them. **This is why we are also calling on the City to increase operating funding for libraries by \$34 million in FY18 to expand 7-day service.** Currently, only 15 of the city's libraries are open 7 days a week. Increased funding will ensure that at least one branch in every Council District is open 7 days. This is particularly important at this moment, when more people than ever rely on our services, from early literacy support to ESOL classes for immigrants and story times for homeless families.

TIME TO RENEW

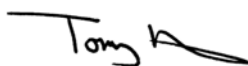
New York City's libraries work tirelessly to realize the dream of Andrew Carnegie. They provide unparalleled opportunity for all comers through their essential free services and resources. While this report highlights the array of capital problems plaguing our libraries, it also shines a spotlight on recent projects completed with the help of the City, and their positive impact on New Yorkers. When our libraries are fixed and improved, more people come through the doors, sign up for classes, and check out books, demonstrating that an investment in libraries is an investment in all New Yorkers.

Now more than ever, libraries are a lifeline for New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds. We need City action to ensure we can address our ongoing infrastructure crisis and provide users with the high-quality library service that New Yorkers across this great city need and deserve.



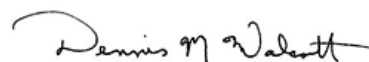
Linda E. Johnson

President & CEO, Brooklyn Public Library



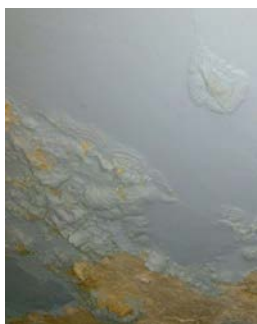
Tony Marx

President & CEO, The New York Public Library



Dennis M. Walcott

President & CEO, Queens Library



IMPACT: RECENTLY RENEWED BRANCHES

INVESTING IN LIBRARIES WORKS

These recent renovations at branches across the five boroughs showcase the clear and immediate impact of capital investment in our public libraries.

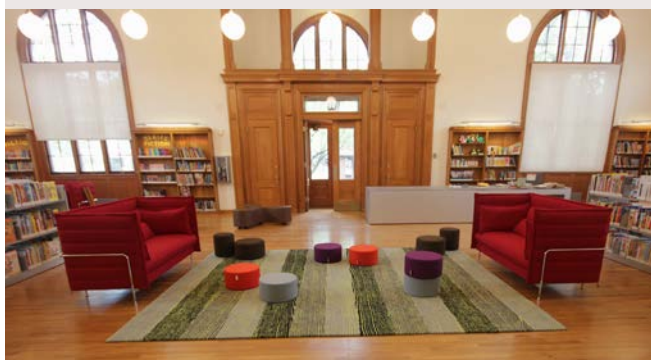
By providing welcoming, modern spaces, our branches can continue to attract new users who benefit from the array of essential free resources available at our libraries. These examples demonstrate that investing in libraries means improving lives and strengthening communities.

KINGSBRIDGE LIBRARY, BRONX FULL RENOVATION, 2011



Program Attendance **+90%**
Visits **+80%** | Circulation **+76%**

STAPLETON LIBRARY, STATEN ISLAND FULL RENOVATION, 2013



Program Attendance **+177%**
Visits **+33%** | Circulation **+51%**

CAMBRIA HEIGHTS LIBRARY, QUEENS NEW TEEN CENTER, 2014



Teen Program Attendance **+84%**
YA Circulation **+29%** | Teen Programs **+106%**

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS LIBRARY, MANHATTAN FULL RENOVATION, 2014



Program Attendance **+105%**
Visits **+47%** | Circulation **+45%**

WILLIAMSBURGH LIBRARY, BROOKLYN 2ND FLOOR RENOVATION, 2015



Children's Programs **+98%**
Teen Programs **+76%** | Visits **+44%**



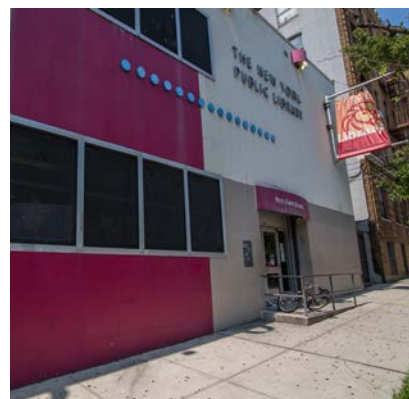
CHRONIC ROOF LEAKS

West Farms Library | Bronx | The New York Public Library



RAINED OUT OF THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

On rainy days at West Farms Library in the Bronx, librarians in the second floor children's room know to be prepared with garbage bags. Water from the leaking roof often breaches the ceiling, forcing staff to cover one-quarter of the room's computers. At times, the chronic issue is so severe that the room must be closed completely until maintenance can come to patch the problem. This is just one of the branch's almost \$20 million in renovation and critical maintenance issues. Other problems include: non-ADA compliant bathrooms, inadequate mechanical systems, outdated interiors, and exterior building cracks.



COMMUNITY NEED

With several schools within walking distance, West Farms Library is a haven for students in the afternoons. Fourth-grader Miguel Pagan (left) is one of countless local children who depend on the branch after school for homework help and much-needed computer access—even when it rains. “The library is a tremendous help to our family,” says his mother, Carmen, adding that Miguel visits the branch nearly every afternoon and is disappointed when many of the computers are unavailable. “We depend on the library,” she notes. “It gives our kids a safe place to go and learn.”

84% Students don't meet state ELA standards

59% Household incomes below \$25,000

67% Speak a foreign language at home



OVERLOADED CIRCUITS

Countee Cullen Library | Manhattan | The New York Public Library



LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

Countee Cullen Library provides Harlem locals of all ages with essential free resources, from job-search help to free computer training and even coding classes. But a cold day can disrupt everything: With only one of four boilers in functioning condition, staff must plug in space heaters to keep visitors comfortable when temperatures drop. Yet, the aging electrical panels at the 76-year-old branch, which is in need of a full renovation, cannot handle the strain—causing overloaded circuits and electrical outages. The lack of electrical capacity also means that the branch cannot provide more public computers or outlets for laptops and other devices to meet the growing needs of its users.



COMMUNITY NEED

Job-seekers such as Elena Tishina (left), a Ukrainian immigrant, rely on the branch for computer training and other resources to help them learn the skills they need to succeed. "It's priceless—it opens your world view," says Tishina, who began taking coding classes in late winter 2017 with the hopes of finding a new job. "This is such an important thing that the library is giving the community." Still, she adds, the branch's maintenance needs make it a challenge at times just to stay focused. "The lab is too cold in the winter, and gets so hot in the summer. It makes it hard to learn when things aren't working properly."

43% High school diploma or lower

39% Household incomes below \$25,000

27% Speak a foreign language at home



FAULTY AIR CONDITIONERS

Pacific Library | Brooklyn | Brooklyn Public Library



HOT AND BOTHERED AT THE LIBRARY

Libraries are no longer for shushing—but at Pacific Library, a little quiet would be welcome. Thanks to a failed HVAC system, the branch is cooled by portable chillers that are as loud as they are ugly. In fact, staff must routinely shout to make themselves heard when helping patrons on the telephone. For branch visitors, reading or studying in the hot, noisy environment is just shy of impossible. The malfunctioning HVAC system is just one of the busy library's many challenges: Built long before architects were mindful of people with disabilities, the branch is virtually inaccessible to patrons who have mobility impairments.



COMMUNITY NEED

The many critical maintenance issues at Pacific Library negatively impact staff and users alike, creating a challenge for the branch to meet the community's needs. Indeed, branch manager Candace Vasquez (left) says that the noise and accessibility issues keep many longtime users away. "Can you imagine trying to read a book or do your homework on the Coney Island boardwalk? That's what it's like here sometimes—hot and noisy," says Vasquez, adding that older patrons in particular have problems accessing the branch. "It's a real shame, because we have so much to offer—great books and programs and a staff that truly cares," she adds. "We just want our patrons to be able to enjoy a nice, comfortable library."

92,819 Annual visits

19% Increase in annual visits

13,347 Program attendees



SEVERE OVERCROWDING

West New Brighton Library | Staten Island | The New York Public Library



A TIGHT SQUEEZE

Just walking through the doors of West New Brighton Library, it is clear that neighborhood demand has long outgrown the building's capacity. With its open floor plan and limited space for public programs, meeting the many needs of users of all ages is a daily challenge: Adults seeking a quiet place to work or read jostle for space just steps from boisterous students at one of the branch's much-needed after-school programs. Meanwhile, with a nearly 270% increase in school visits alone last year, the branch's program space is nearly always booked, making it difficult to add new services to meet the surging community demand.



COMMUNITY NEED

Neighborhood teens in particular flock to the branch after school to do homework, use the computers, and find a safe place to relax. Yet, without space for a dedicated teen zone, students are forced to squeeze into an open area behind the circulation desk—sparking frequent complaints from patrons about the noise. “We’re constantly being told to quiet down,” says Olaitan Okeowo (left), 16, a regular at the library after school. “On most days it’s packed beyond imagination,” he adds. “Despite all the great things at the library, space is a major issue,” says the teenager.

129% Increase in early literacy attendance

94% Increase in overall program attendance

41% High school diploma or lower



CHRONIC FLOODING & MILDEW

Rosedale Library | Queens | Queens Library



FEELING SWAMPED

Rosedale Community Library has reached the end of its useful life—just as the surrounding neighborhood needs it more than ever. One of the three smallest branches in Queens, the aging library simply cannot keep up with the community's growing demands on its space and resources. In particular, the branch is plagued by its proximity to the marshlands surrounding JFK Airport, which has created a chronic flooding problem dating back to its opening in 1962. Indeed, years of water issues have caused significant damage in the basement, while the repeated flooding has left behind years of accumulated mold and mildew.



COMMUNITY NEED

Some libraries are known to be a port in the storm during bad weather—but not Rosedale. In fact, longtime neighborhood residents such as Guy Bernard Lalanne (left) know to avoid visiting the branch after bad weather. “Sometimes after a rain, one can smell something unpleasant,” says Lalanne, referring to the strong odors that seem to emanate from the basement after a storm brings more flooding. Branch staff try their best to use disinfectants and deodorizers to mask the smell, he adds, but they can only do so much until the problem is addressed. “It’s a funky odor,” adds Matthieu Jean-Pierre, another regular patron.

30% Increase in program sessions

138% Increase in annual visits

172% Increase in program attendance

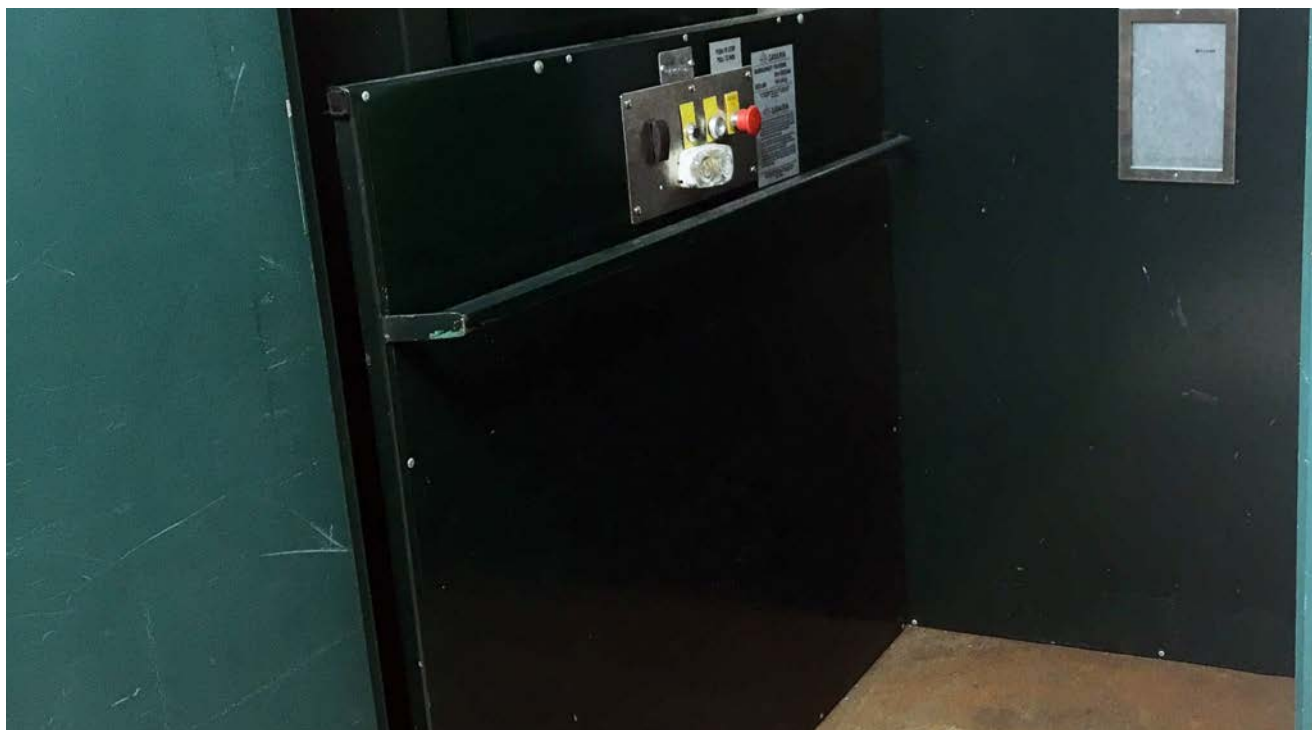


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INACCESSIBLE & INHOSPITABLE SPACES

Saratoga Library | Brooklyn | Brooklyn Public Library



IN NEED OF A LIFT

From teen tech classes to job-search and resume help, Saratoga Library hosts a wide range of activities in its downstairs program and meeting spaces—for those who can get there. The branch, which opened in 1908, has no elevator, only a rickety lift. Barely big enough for two, it is prone to frequent breakdowns. The only other option for the branch's patrons—many of whom are elderly—is to descend a steep and poorly lit staircase. Among the more-than-100-year-old branch's other critical maintenance issues is a severe lack of ventilation in the first floor bathrooms, which creates an unwelcome atmosphere for people browsing nearby shelves.



COMMUNITY NEED

Library user Claire Walsh (left) is one of countless local residents who rely on the historic Saratoga branch to borrow books and use the public computers. She is also one of many regular users who are frustrated by the branch's critical maintenance issues, including its lack of accessibility and the persistent odors emanating from the aging bathroom on the main floor. "The public restroom has no ventilation," explains Walsh. "No vents, no windows, nothing." The smell, she adds, frequently reaches across the branch to the customer service area, keeping some users from taking greater advantage of the library. "It is overbearing. If you need help or you're looking for a book, you don't want to go over there," she says.

24% High school diploma or lower

38,000 Annual computer sessions

15% Increase in annual visits

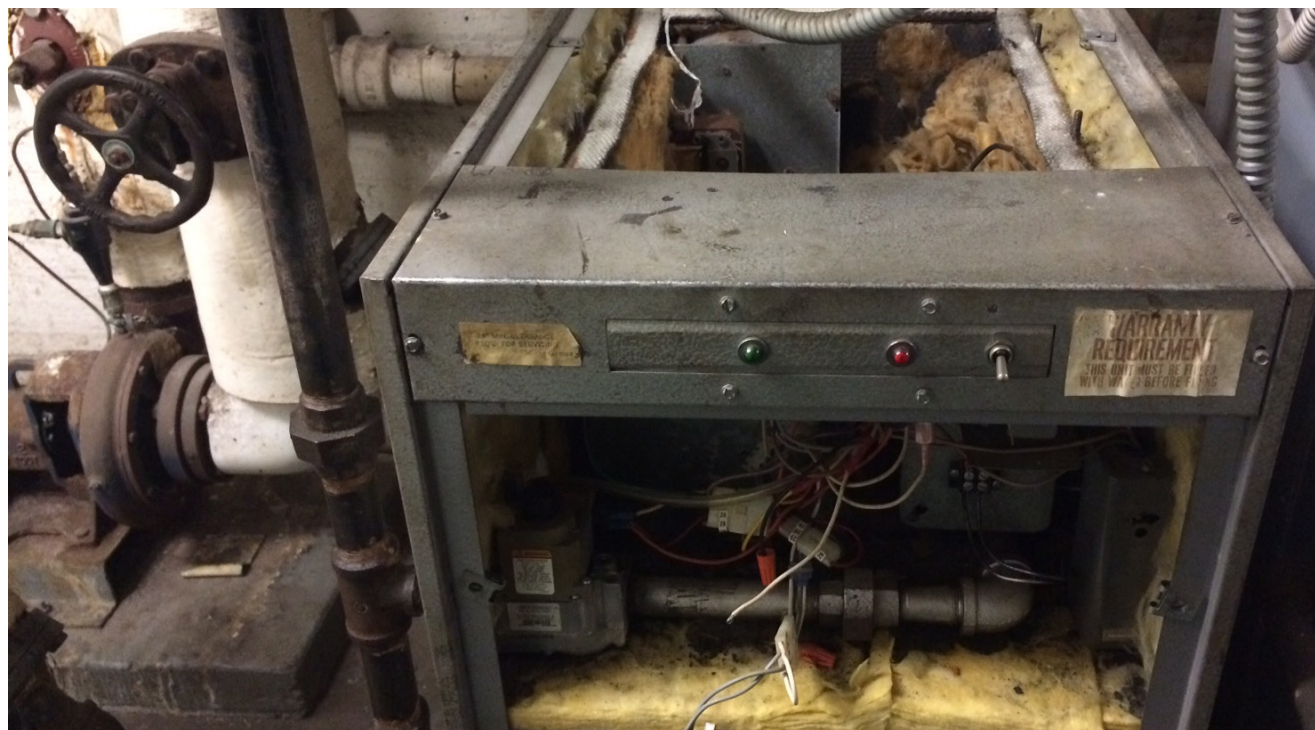


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INSUFFICIENT HEAT

Andrew Heiskell Library | Manhattan | The New York Public Library



BRAVING THE COLD

Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library is the only place in the city where vision-impaired patrons have free access to talking book machines and other assistive technology. But in the winter, the branch's malfunctioning heating system can cause the temperature inside to plunge to a bone-chilling 58 degrees. Patrons huddle around a small space heater to wait for help from staff, or else endure the cold to access the services they need. In addition to insufficient heating, other improvements must be made to ensure that Heiskell is safe for its visitors, including an accessible circulation desk and updated furniture.



COMMUNITY NEED

The only resource of its kind in the city, patrons from across the five boroughs rely on the Braille and Talking Book Library to stay connected to the world. Several times a week, Brooklyn resident Roz McDavid (left) travels for more than an hour to reach the branch, where she attends workshops on adaptive technology and participates in a book club, despite the sometimes uncomfortable conditions. "Prior to losing my vision, I was always a bookworm," says Roz, adding that the library's resources have allowed her to continue to enjoy literature. "The technology training here has been invaluable. It has helped me with things that I didn't think I would be able to do."

86,575 Annual visits

434,686 Total circulation

327 Classes and programs for all ages



WATER DAMAGE

Great Kills Library | Staten Island | The New York Public Library



SEEPING PROBLEMS

In the last year, the bustling Great Kills Library has seen its program attendance jump by nearly 40%—but the constant demand on its only community room creates significant issues when it rains. Deteriorated windows and walls allow water to seep into the basement room, forcing staff to scramble to find replacement space for scheduled events until the problem can be dried and patched. Beyond this, the branch struggles with mildew and water damage from the chronic damp, along with an array of other critical maintenance needs, including a failing HVAC system, non-ADA compliant bathrooms, and a damaged facade and roof.



COMMUNITY NEED

Among the many users who rely on the basement community room at Great Kills Library is a dedicated group of knitters that meets every week to work on projects, trade tips, and socialize. Except, of course, when it rains. On those days, the group is rerouted to the upstairs children's room, disrupting children's programs and forcing the knitters to walk up a steep staircase. "It's a great inconvenience," says longtime knitter Rosalie Dimiceli (left), who values all that the branch offers but wishes the chronic leaks could be repaired once and for all. "The flooding is terrible," she adds.

56% Students don't meet state ELA standards

46% Increase in school visits

45% High school diploma or lower



BROKEN ELEVATORS

Allerton Library | Bronx | The New York Public Library



AN UPHILL BATTLE

When the aging elevator stops running at Allerton Library, it's often out of service for months at a time. This makes it challenging for patrons with limited mobility to access needed services, and for parents and caregivers with young children to reach the upstairs children's area. To manage these persistent outages, staff must help carry patrons' strollers up and down the stairs, or leave them clustered in the branch's high-use entryway. It's not just the elevator: Allerton's \$2.4 million in critical maintenance needs also include a failing HVAC system and deteriorated windows and roof.



COMMUNITY NEED

Early literacy programs are in especially high demand at Allerton Library, where many educators and families rely on the branch's story times to help teach essential pre-reading skills. Margarita Rivera (left), who runs a nearby daycare, is one such regular. "We enjoy going. They like the playtime and the music," says Rivera, adding that when the elevator breaks, she's forced to get as many as nine kids up the stairs. "It's crazy!" Nevertheless, Rivera values how the programs encourage her students to experience new things while developing an early love of books and reading. "It's nice to introduce the kids to the library," she says.

71% Students don't meet state ELA standards

36% Household incomes below \$25,000

52% Speak a foreign language at home



INADEQUATE PROGRAM SPACE

Douglaston—Little Neck Library | Queens | Queens Library



NO ROOM TO GROW

Douglaston—Little Neck Community Library has become the heart of the Northeast Queens arts scene. It houses three permanent art galleries and two historical photo exhibits, and offers an ongoing lecture and film series about the area's Native American population. But the bustling hub for books and culture simply does not have the public space necessary to serve the rapidly expanding and changing community. Built in 1961, the branch is one of the smallest in Queens, with only a single program room that seats just 45 people. The lack of space is a constant challenge for staff who struggle to find room to meet the community's growing needs.



COMMUNITY NEED

Longtime patron Arline Abdalian (left) leads the branch's Friends group, which seeks to enrich residents' lives through the library—but due to the branch's lack of space, the group can only do so much. “The building is too small and inadequate to support the increased use by the community,” says Abdalian, adding that Douglaston Library offers more than 400 programs a year, but could reach many more users if given the chance. “Our meeting room can legally seat only 45 people, yet our events and programs have consistently drawn standing-room-only crowds,” says Arline. “The existing building is too small.”

5,789 Program attendees

99,538 Annual visits

94,000 Books and other materials circulated



INVEST IN LIBRARIES, INVEST IN ALL NEW YORKERS

As the branches highlighted in this report indicate, New York City's 216 public libraries are plagued by chronic critical maintenance needs due to years of inadequate funding. Meanwhile, only 7% of our branches are open 7 days a week. Increased investment in FY18 would allow us to fulfill our mission by providing our vital services in modern and accessible spaces—and at the times they are needed.

