

LANDER

for Mayor

Turning the Page: A New Chapter for NYC Libraries

As part of Brad's plan to make our City better-run, Brad will transform New York City's libraries into fully funded, civic hubs—expanding hours, building new branches, modernizing infrastructure, improving worker conditions, and defending libraries as vital spaces for democracy, learning, and community life.

Introduction

Brad is running for Mayor to deliver a safer, more affordable, and better-run city for New Yorkers. Every New Yorker deserves access to vibrant libraries that serve as hubs for education, imagination, recreation, workforce development, civic engagement, and community connection. Libraries are extraordinary civic treasures that are often cornerstones of the neighborhoods they serve. They foster a more creative, equitable, informed, democratic, and livable city for all. Brad knows that investing in libraries means investing in the public good, and he wants to further support the libraries in becoming a first stop for an even wider range of informational needs.

As a City Council member, Brad was a consistent champion for New York City's public libraries, securing expense and capital funding for all six branches in the 39th District—including Carroll Gardens, Pacific Street, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Borough Park, and Kensington. He helped [bring participatory budgeting to New York City](#), using libraries as hubs for democratic engagement and community-driven projects. Brad funded major upgrades like a new community room at the Kensington Library, technology improvements at Carroll Gardens and Windsor Terrace, [a celebrated reading garden at Park Slope](#), and a comprehensive renovation plan for Pacific Street. He also championed culturally relevant collections, supported inclusive programming like [Drag Story Hour](#) and the "Books Unbanned" initiative to defend access to diverse literature, and [expanded library access by opening four library branches with six-day-a-week service on Sundays to accommodate Orthodox Jewish communities](#), who cannot use libraries on Saturdays.

As Comptroller, Brad has continued to advocate for libraries as essential civic spaces. He pushed back against harmful budget cuts, [highlighting how a mere 0.4% of the city's budget funds libraries](#), yet deep cuts have slashed services like seven-day access. Brad's office produced detailed analyses exposing the disproportionate impact of these cuts on communities. A

steadfast supporter of inclusive access to knowledge, he has celebrated programs like the Brooklyn Public Library's partnership with the Bard Prison Initiative and actively participated in events like BPL's "Night at the Library," reinforcing his belief that libraries must remain vibrant, welcoming centers of democracy, identity, and opportunity for all New Yorkers.

As book bans and library defunding rage on across the United States, supported by an authoritarian President, New York's libraries can be a beacon for the role of information and learning in a democratic society. As Mayor, Brad will protect collections and programs, as well as librarians and library staff.

The Issue

In an era marked by relentless assaults on our shared truths—from baseless election denial to the spread of dangerous conspiracy theories—the Trump administration has launched a sustained war on institutions of higher learning, the independent press, and federal agencies. These assaults don't just undermine trust in government, they erode the shared reality essential for a functioning democracy.

Libraries stand as a powerful antidote to this crisis. That's why Trump is gutting the only federal agency specific to libraries and the limited federal funding it disburses, the [Institute for Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS). At the same time, the Adams administration has left our local libraries chronically underfunded, with unpredictable budgets forcing service cuts that affect every library user. Rather than investing in our libraries, he has repeatedly threatened library budgets and then claimed his subsequent reversals as savings. Many branches are open [fewer than 50 hours a week and closed on Sundays](#), making them virtually inaccessible to working New Yorkers who want to use them.

Brad's Solution

Expanding Access to Libraries

Our city's three public library systems that serve the five boroughs are vital sources of resilience for all New Yorkers, especially our most vulnerable neighbors. Our libraries [serve over 35 million visitors per year](#) at [219 local library locations](#), providing free access to resources like books, media, and technology, plus a vast array of services including [career and professional development](#) as well as [educational, cultural, and recreational programming](#) for New Yorkers of all ages. Libraries are key to our [social infrastructure](#), fostering social cohesion, bridging social divides, and creating community resilience. Demand for library resources is significant and growing, with [rising library card registrations](#) and [waitlists for programming](#) in the thousands.

As Mayor, Brad will:

- **Create new extended-hours pilot programs.** This initiative will provide funding and support to enable the three library systems to apply for additional resources to

creatively expand hours to meet the varying needs of their constituents. The program will enable the library systems to pilot new ideas solicited from library workers across all branches in partnership with library unions. Some branches may propose staying open on Saturday nights until midnight once a month for teens. Others might hold family sleepovers at the library, inspired by the Brooklyn Central Library's "[Night at the Library](#)" Still others might mount an [Anti-Prom](#). Most libraries don't open until 10 a.m., so some branches could add early morning hours—from 8 to 10 a.m.—to provide access before work and school. All participating libraries will convene upon completion of the pilot to share best practices and discuss ways to scale up the models.

- **Double the number of branches with seven-day service and expand Sunday hours in the central branches.** More New Yorkers will have access to neighborhood libraries on Sundays, often the only available day for working people to visit.
- **Automatically register public school students for a library card.** Brad will launch a new program with the Department of Education and the three public library systems to automatically sign up every public school registrant for a library card and bolster collections for young adults and children in the systems, empowering students to use the libraries.
- **Champion public school libraries.** Today, our 1,600 public schools are staffed by only 250 certified librarians. Brad supports legislation requiring all schools to [report annual figures on school librarians](#) and, as mayor, he will work to ensure that every NYC public school has a fully stocked school library that is staffed with a trained librarian.

New Strategies to Expand, Modernize, and Stabilize the System

The need for improvements to library buildings is constant and the role libraries play in civic vitality is well-established. It's time to put the libraries on stable footing to undertake important improvements and expansions.

As Comptroller, Brad has consistently advocated for restoring funding to the public library systems and exposed the consequences of budget cuts. A recent report from his office analyzed the [impact of Mayor Adams' cuts to crucial services like library access](#). Although libraries account for just 0.4% of the City's \$115 billion expense budget, a 5% cut to their funding saved only \$24 million—at the cost of eliminating seven-day service at branches that previously offered it.

As Mayor, Brad will:

- **Activate air rights above existing branches:** selling them to generate new revenues for capital improvements or expansions, or transferring them to create new community facilities.
- **Integrate new library branches into vibrant mixed-use communities** developed on repurposed municipal golf courses as part of his [housing plan](#), engaging Citizens Assemblies to ensure that community voices guide the design and placement of these

facilities.

- **Build at least five new co-located libraries and affordable housing developments** over five years, building on the successful examples in [Sunset Park](#) and Inwood, addressing the city's urgent housing shortage and the critical need for enhanced community resources.
- **Explore a separate library maintenance fund**, aside from the capital and expense budget, to ensure that libraries remain up to date with the resources and technological equipment that are necessary to serve the community.
- **Improve budget stability for libraries.** Although our City's three public library systems are independent nonprofits, they receive nearly all of their operating funding through the City budget. Ongoing uncertainty around their budgets means that libraries are hesitant to invest in programming and hire staff for fear that funding will dry up when the next budget cycle comes around. As Mayor, Brad will end the foolish "budget dance" of proposing cuts to libraries, parks, and cultural institutions every year, just to make the City Council fight to restore them. Instead, he will improve the budget stability for public library systems by baselining annual operating funding for the three library systems. These changes are part of his proposal to [modernize NYC's fiscal framework](#), making the process more transparent, with thoughtful planning for savings and efficiencies so we can invest in new priorities – and protect library budgets.
- **Invest in library infrastructure over the long term.** Brad will negotiate more stable, long-term capital funding so that the three library systems can plan thoughtfully for projects that address their many infrastructure needs. He will also continue his long-standing efforts to [improve the City's capital projects management](#), so these projects can move on time and on budget, instead of many years later and millions of dollars over budget.

Strengthen the Libraries' Connections to Other City Services

Libraries are one of the most visible outposts of City government in our neighborhoods and can increase their role as gateways to other City services.

As Mayor, Brad will:

- **Increase collaboration between libraries and City government through a new Deputy Mayor for Cultural Life.** Brad will task this senior member of his administration with leading the collaboration between City government and the library systems, including on City-funded capital projects, which present particular hurdles. This will not only improve the efficiency with which libraries engage with our City government, but will also enable better coordination during times of increased need.
- **Make libraries a "front desk" for certain City services.** Brad will deepen partnerships between libraries and City agencies, expanding their role in public health, education, climate resilience, and more. For example, libraries can and should be better leveraged

to support asylum seekers as part of a comprehensive resettlement approach.

Supporting Library Workers

Our library workers are a critical component of the knowledge economy and our city's democracy, and they deserve good jobs, freedom of association, and dignity. Librarians are a crucial resource for New Yorkers, but they must have the proper tools and support to help those who need it. Brad will ensure that libraries receive the culturally competent and language-accessible materials they need to support the New Yorkers who rely on them.

As Mayor, Brad will:

- **Staff libraries properly.** Libraries across our city are struggling with low staffing. Brad will work with our City's library unions to confront staffing challenges head-on. This means ensuring that libraries open with more than two staff members, fixing a challenge that many library workers face today. He will also ensure that union and worker advocates have seats on the three library boards of trustees to advocate for library workers alongside decision-makers.
- **Support better wages and benefits for library workers.** Brad will use his position to advocate for higher salaries to retain employees. He supports the Human Services Council's #JustPay campaign to include COLAs for nonprofit workers in organizations contracted by the City, including the City libraries. He will work with the Council to update the City's living wage law, which has not increased since it was set, making the living wage far less than what is needed for a family to survive on. And he will provide the financial resources to the three library systems to enable them to comply with any new obligations.
- **Advance workers' rights, including and beyond libraries.** Brad will create an Office of Workers' Rights in City Hall to lead a cross-agency strategy for protecting and promoting the rights of workers in New York City. This new office would be charged with ensuring that our city has the nation's strongest labor, civil rights, and immigrant worker protections, and adequate systems for enforcing them. The office will coordinate the use of all of the City's tools – legislation, procurement, franchises, concessions, land use, economic development, budget—to lift up working families, to advance their pay, benefits, working conditions, and dignity, and to make this city more affordable for them. [Read Brad's Workers' Rights plan.](#)

Brad's Record

As a City Council member, Brad provided expense and capital funding for every one of the six library branches in the 39th District (Carroll Gardens, Pacific Street, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Borough Park, and even Kensington, which was not technically quite in his district). He helped bring participatory budgeting to New York City, an initiative that offered voting sites in every one of those libraries, and also led to many resident-proposed projects in our neighborhood library branches. As part of the Gowanuz Rezoning, Brad secured significant capital resources for the comprehensive renovation of the Pacific Street Branch. Through these efforts, he funded:

- The creation of a vibrant community room at the Kensington Public Library, providing space for rehearsals and dance performances
- New technology at the Carroll Gardens and Windsor Terrace branches, enhancing access to digital resources for residents
- The amazing reading garden (complete with Knuffle Bunny statue), as well as new workspaces and meeting spaces at the Park Slope branch
- A plan for the comprehensive renovation of the Pacific Street branch
- Culturally relevant books at the Borough Park branch

As Comptroller, Brad has consistently advocated for the restoration of cuts to the public library systems, and analyzed the consequences. A budget report released recently by the Office of the Comptroller analyzed the impact of Mayor Adams' budget cuts to crucial services like library access. The library system's budget accounts for just 0.4% of the City's total expense budget (totaling over \$115 billion), yet cuts of 5% to the library budget have saved a mere \$24 million—at the cost of eliminating seven-day service in branches where it previously existed.

Brad is proud to be a longstanding champion of the idea that libraries are critical civic resources for democracy, and must be open and welcoming to all New Yorkers. Here are a few examples:

- He helped bring participatory budgeting to New York City, with brainstorming town halls, project development meetings, project fairs, and voting sites all taking place in public libraries—bringing thousands of people into the branches to engage in democratic action together—and often resulting in projects to fund the library branches.
- He has attended and advertised BPL's "Night at the Library," which brings an extraordinarily diverse set of New Yorkers together in the Brooklyn Central Branch for book talks that explore issues of identity and community.