



LIBRARY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20190722-4a1: Support for Austin Public Library FY20 Budget

Date: July 22, 2019

Subject: Support for Austin Public Library FY20 Budget

Motioned By: Commission Member Williams

Seconded By: Vice Chair Finney

Recommendation

Support for Austin Public Library proposed budget for FY2020

Description of Recommendation to Council

Requesting that the Austin City Council vote in favor of the proposed Austin Public Library budget of \$54,685,661 for FY2020, a 4.8% increase or \$2.5 million increase from FY19, including an increase to the materials budget by 3.6% or \$162,661.

Rationale:

The Brookings Institution recently recognized, public libraries perform a “hub role in the community – using partnerships with other institutions to connect people with services and help.” See Cabello, M. and Butler, S., “How public libraries help build healthy communities.” Brookings, March 30, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/30/how-public-libraries-help-build-healthy-communities/>

The Austin City Council has adopted a strategic direction guiding the City for the next three to five years. Austin Strategic Direction 2023 outlines a shared vision for the City and six priority Strategic outcomes:

- Economic Opportunity and Affordability
- Mobility
- Safety
- Health and Environment
- Culture and Lifelong Learning
- Government that Works for All

As a vital public space and community hub, the Austin Public Library supports and advances all six key outcome areas of the City’s Strategic Direction. This proposed budget includes three items recommended by other commissions, including Wi-Fi hotspots, training for staff working with those experiencing homelessness, and programs for seniors.

Austin Public Library makes a significant and growing contribution to the City’s commitment to Culture and Lifelong Learning.

Austin Public Library operates and maintains 20 branches, Central Library, Austin History Center, Recycled Reads and a Bookmobile. Austin Public Library provides cardholders access to over 1.5 million items, including conventional and digital format books, magazines, periodicals, music, films and online databases. Library cardholders have increased by 11% since the opening of the new Central Library. The new Central Library, hailed as one of the greatest places in the world by Time Magazine, averages about 100,000 visitors each month.

Austin Public Library offers a variety of resources and programs for visitors of all ages from babies (Baby Social Hour) to seniors (Computer Basics for Seniors) and everyone in between.

Austin Public Library enhances the reputation of Austin as the Live Music Capital of the World through its Electric Lady Bird digital music streaming program, which delivers commercial-free, curated music from Central Texas artists.

In addition to Culture and Lifelong Learning, the Austin Public Library provides vital support for the other five strategic priorities of the city budget, including Economic Opportunity; Health; Safety; Mobility; and a Government that Works.

The public library offers free services to Austinites of all backgrounds, including those persons experiencing homelessness, including a space to simply come inside and escape the weather. Free access to computers and the Internet provides a vital lifeline to those who otherwise are unable to use these resources. Austin Public Library has hired two community service coordinators who have the responsibility to support staff serving people experiencing homelessness. These two coordinators work with the Homeless Outreach Street Team (“HOST”) to provide services at the Terrazas Branch Library as well as at Pop-up Resource Clinics. During June and July, one coordinator referred 26 customers to direct social service providers for housing and case management. Austin Public Library continues to provide staff development training to support the ability of all employees to provide a welcoming, equitable, and safe environment for customers.

Citizen satisfaction with library services is at 85%, which is 11% greater than the national average for cities with a population greater than 250,000.

In his remarks at the opening of the new Central Library, Mayor Steve Adler said, “this is our cathedral. And what we do in this library will determine what kind of city we are.” We believe we are a city that recognizes and supports its vital community hub and request that the Austin City Council vote in favor of the FY2020 proposed budget.

Vote

For: Chair Hanna; Vice Chair Finney; and Commission Members Dwyer, Ramos, Smyer, and Williams

Against:

Abstain:

Absent: Commission Members Dabbert, Pardo-Kaplan, and Self

Attest: 