File #: 251083, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Council Committees on Legislative Oversight and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold hearings to investigate the current conditions and future of Philadelphia's public libraries.

WHEREAS, Libraries in the City of Philadelphia provide safe, accessible, and free educational resources for every resident and visitor alike, regardless of socioeconomic status. The ultimate mission of libraries is to help empower people and improve their lives; and

WHEREAS, Libraries are now at the forefront of a dynamic shift, embracing digital innovation, redefining community engagement, and adapting to the changing needs of a diverse and interconnected world. The future of libraries is shaped by a convergence of trends, challenges, and innovative solutions, marking a departure from traditional models to an era where libraries serve as dynamic hubs of information, learning, and cultural enrichment; and

WHEREAS, As modern communities increasingly rely on digital technologies for communication <https://www.lisedunetwork.com/communication-meaning-definition/>, education <https://www.lisedunetwork.com/basic-concept-education/>, and entertainment, public libraries must evolve to meet the growing demand for digital resources. In embracing digital transformation, libraries have transcended their traditional role as repositories of printed knowledge. Libraries throughout the world are leveraging these immersive technologies to create interactive and engaging learning experiences.

WHEREAS, This digital evolution is not just about technological integration but also reflects a deeper understanding of the need to remain accessible and relevant in an era where information is consumed in diverse formats; and

WHEREAS, The Free Library of Philadelphia operates a network of over 50 neighborhood library branches that serve as essential community anchors, providing literacy programs, early-childhood education, digital access, job-seeker support, public meeting spaces, and cultural programming for residents of all ages; and

WHEREAS, Many of Philadelphia's library branches were constructed between the 1900s and the 1970s, and face significant structural deterioration, outdated building systems, chronic maintenance needs, and accessibility barriers that limit their ability to fully serve the public; and

WHEREAS, Numerous branches have experienced extended closures or service disruptions in recent years due to aging HVAC systems, roof failures, water infiltration, electrical hazards, and other capital deficiencies that reflect decades of deferred maintenance; and

WHEREAS, The City's libraries are among the most heavily utilized civic facilities in Philadelphia, yet capital investment has not kept pace with demand, technological advances, or community expectations for safe, modern, and climate-resilient public buildings; and

WHEREAS, Neighborhood libraries are critical public infrastructure, especially in communities with limited

access to educational enrichment, digital resources, and safe after-school spaces, and failing facilities disproportionately harm the same communities where libraries play the most significant role; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's recent capital programs, including the Rebuild Initiative, have initiated important improvements to select library branches, but a system-wide facilities plan and reconstruction strategy specifically for Free Library of Philadelphia properties remains necessary to meet the full scope of need; and

WHEREAS, Communities in Philadelphia deserve state-of-the-art, world-class facilities found in other parts of the Philadelphia region, in other cities, and even other countries. The City should commit to conducting a full analysis of the state of the City's libraries, identifying candidates for full reconstruction and replacement with new buildings reflecting a modern, multimedia, educational, and community service approach that reflects the needs of communities today; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committees on Legislative Oversight and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs are hereby authorized to hold hearings to investigate the current conditions and future of Philadelphia's public libraries the condition of Philadelphia's public libraries.