

# **ST. CHARLES PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT**

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## **DECENNIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY**

### **FINAL REPORT**

**OCTOBER 11, 2023**

**Decennial Committee Members:**

Robert T. Gephart, Board President  
Mary Kruse, Board Vice President/Secretary  
Michael J. Hill, Board Treasurer  
Bonnie Dauer, Trustee  
Claudia Frost, Trustee  
Shane Hampton, Trustee  
Allison Lanthrum, Trustee  
Kate Buckson, Library Director  
Becky Blaine, Library District Resident  
Sue Pfothenauer, Library District Resident

**Decennial Committee Meeting Dates:**

May 10, 2023  
August 16, 2023  
October 11, 2023

**Statement on Report Collaboration:**

This report was made possible through the efforts of numerous Library staff, trustees, volunteers, and community partners. The data and narrative have been drawn from a variety of individuals and resources. An effort has been made to create original content, descriptions, and statements, where possible. Some information has been drawn from the Library website and promotional content.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **HISTORY**

The St. Charles Public Library has a rich history of serving the community with constantly evolving resources and spaces. The Library's mission is: *We support the growth and creativity of the individual and build the spirit of the community by providing welcoming spaces, robust collections, responsive services, and enriching programs.*



The story of the Library begins in 1888, when a dozen citizens met to make plans for the first Library Association. This subscription based library had an annual membership fee of \$2.00 and was legally incorporated in 1889.

In 1906, the Association members decided that the Library should become a public institution to better serve the entire community. The township residents voted to form a tax-supported public township library, and the first Board of Directors met on April 18.

After becoming a township library, a letter was sent to philanthropist Andrew Carnegie requesting funds to build a new library. Mr. Carnegie's personal secretary responded with a letter dated December 13, 1906 to inform the Library Board that "Mr. Carnegie will be glad to give Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Dollars to erect a Free Public Library Building for St. Charles." The remainder of the total cost of \$15,000 was funded by local donations.

The site was selected for the building (what is today 1 S. 6th Avenue) and the building was designed by Chicago architects Phillips, Rogers & Woodyatt. The new Library opened to the public in December 1908. After numerous expansions and renovations over the years, the original Carnegie Library presently serves as the Carnegie Quiet Room and Carnegie Community Room.

The Library Board asked the voters in 1978 to convert from a township library to a district library that would operate independently from the township government. This change offered the ability to extend the library boundaries beyond the township limits and offer services to unserved neighboring communities and portions of the school district.

Since that time, the St. Charles Public Library District has been a foundation of community learning and growth.

## GOVERNANCE

The Library is governed by an elected seven-member Board of Trustees who live within the district boundaries. Although the Library District serves all of the St. Charles city limits, we also include parts of South Elgin, Wayne, and West Chicago. The Library has boundaries that cross both Kane and DuPage Counties.

The duties of a public library trustee are fiscal oversight, establishing Library policies, and overseeing the Library Director. The powers of the Board are stated in the Illinois statutes, 75 ILCS 16/30-55 – 16/30-105.

Trustees receive an in-person orientation upon their election, which includes documentation about applicable laws, their duties as a trustee, and overall training related to their role. Open Meetings Act training is completed within the first 90 days in office. The Library maintains records and makes them available to the public in compliance with the Illinois Records Retention Act, the Open Meetings Act, and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

They are responsible for final approval of the Library's budget and appropriations, the tax levy, and an audit of the Library's financial statements.

## MATERIALS & RESOURCES

The Library provides a popular collection of books, magazines, periodicals, electronic resources, kits, and multi-media materials. Our physical collection consists of 236,420 items and electronic resources, including e-books and downloadable audiobooks, number over 200,000 individual items.

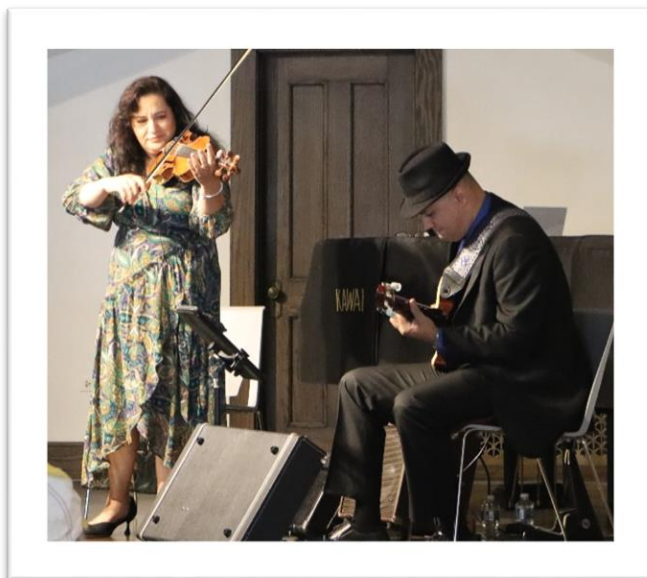
The Library is part of a consortium (SWAN) that provides an online public catalog that has location and availability information among all of the libraries. The Library maintains a website ([www.scpld.org](http://www.scpld.org)) that hosts a variety of information and service needs 24 hours a day, including access to a range of licensed databases, eBooks, music, and other downloadable material.



SCPL serves a population slightly over 55,000 and circulates over 1 million items annually. There are approximately 30,000 cardholders in our Library District, which means there is a portion of our population that are not taking advantage of Library resources available to them. On a yearly basis, over 300,000 people visit the Library.

Programming, both in-person and virtual, is a staple of our expansive offerings. Programs serve residents of all ages and include: early literacy initiatives, STEAM programs, story times, exam cram for teens, historical portrayals, cooking demonstrations, classical music concerts, and much more. In the last fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), SCPL offered 1,596 programs to 36,819 attendees.

STC Creative is the Library’s makerspace which provides one-on-one equipment tutorials, as well as ongoing programs that utilize different creative tools. The talented staff work with patrons on their projects using 3-D printers, a laser cutter, vinyl cutter, heat press, embroidery machine, button maker, and more. STC Creative also features a sound studio where music demos and podcasts can be recorded using advanced software and sound recording devices.



We also have a considerable amount of people who use the Library for technology needs, skill building, and job seeking. SCPL partners with an organization called WorkNet Batavia to provide career counseling, resume reviews, and programs that are helpful to our business community. Computer classes are offered several times each month to help patrons learn how to effectively use software, like Microsoft Word and Excel, as well as instruction for popular applications like Canva.

Services	FY 2022-2023
Computer Sessions Provided	20,156
Guest Passes Requested	6,698
Printed Pages (Print & Copies)	137,184
Scanning Jobs Performed	5,014
Technology Desk Tutorials Given	394 Hours

Staff at our five service desks help check out materials, direct patrons to areas of the building, solve complicated technology issues, and answer reference questions. In the last year, 96,839 reference questions were answered by our staff.

SCPL completed a major building renovation in July 2021. This project included adding 10,000 square feet of additional space and renovating the remaining 50,000 square feet to better meet the needs of the community. The Library has five study rooms and five larger meeting rooms that provide space for in house programs, board meetings, and local community group gatherings. The building also houses an extensive art collection, a coffee shop, and an outdoor terrace area for adults and children.

## PERSONNEL

Just under 100 employees work for the Library, with approximately half being full-time and the other half working part-time. The average retention rate for an employee at SCPL is 6.5 years.



AFSCME Council 31 represents the Library staff Union and the first contract was ratified as of August 30, 2023.

Last year, the Library spent nearly \$26,000 on staff development and provided over 2,000 hours of continuing education training. Eligible staff may apply for the education assistance benefit that provides \$2,500 per year to employees seeking higher education.

The Library maintains several organizational memberships, including ALA, ILA, and LACONI. In addition,

employees are encouraged to join local organizations to be library advocates in the community. Examples are the St. Charles Women's Club, Kiwanis, Rotary, the Heritage Center, Women's Business Council of the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown St. Charles Partnership and its committees.

## LIBRARY FINANCIALS

The Board is responsible for the adoption of the budget and appropriation (B&A) as well as the levy. The B&A sets the limit on Library expenditures for the year. The levy may be the same as or less than the B&A, taking into account the Library's needs and other sources of funds. The levy is applied to the equalized assessed value of property to generate the Library's real estate tax revenue.

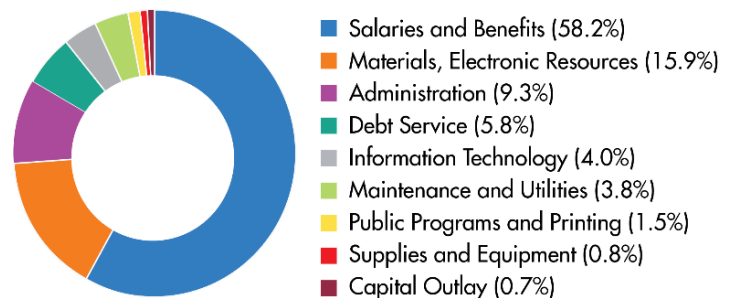
The real estate tax revenue derived from the levy is limited by various tax rates and by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law commonly known as the "tax cap". Subject to adjustments in assessed values due primarily to new construction and annexation of territory, the increase in revenue from year to year is limited, or capped. Each year, revenue may only be increased slightly pursuant to the Consumer Price Index **OR** 5%, whichever is less. Stated simply, no matter how much the Board levies, the consequence of the tax cap is a modest increase in real estate tax revenue from year to year.



The Library has annual revenue totaling approximately \$8.5 million dollars. Local tax dollars account for almost 95% of that income. Other revenue sources include grants, gifts, photocopies, interest on investments, and fees for services.

SCPL maintains several different accounting funds, which fall into the category of either a major fund or a nonmajor fund. One of the major funds is our capital reserve fund that is used to save money for future projects related to the facility and grounds. The other major fund is our general fund, from which most operational expenses are drawn. General expenses include salaries, collection expenses, debt certificates, training and development, information technology, and library supplies.

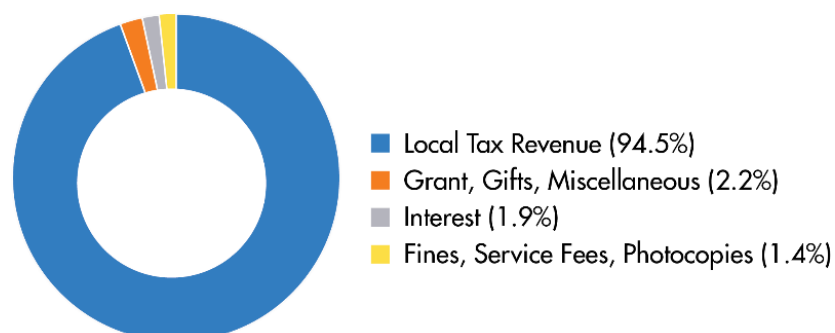
Salaries and fringe benefits for all employees totals \$4,983,897 which represents about 58% of overall expenditures. Collection material expenses are approximately \$1.4 million dollars, or 16% of the total budget. Debt certificate payments equal about 6% of the Library's expenses each year.



The Library earns interest income through maintaining investments in accordance with State law. We also look for opportunities for grant funding at a public (State, Federal, or local) level and also for private grants, gifts, and donations.

For three years (2018 – 2021) the Board of Trustees voted to keep the levy value the same during the building renovation project. This was done as a way to show a commitment to the taxpayers who helped provide funds for the large scale project while the work was being done and services were interrupted.

The financial outlook for the City of St. Charles and the surrounding area is stable. Populations are not expected to grow at significant rates and the local economy remains strong despite an unusual global economy. According to the U.S. Census, St. Charles has a median household income of \$118,298 compared to the State average of \$76,812.



## **PARTNERSHIPS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION**

**Daily Bean Coffee Shop:** Located in the Library, this coffee shop is a collaboration between SCPL and local School District 303. Monday – Friday, from the hours of 10am – 1pm, the transition program provides student workers between the ages of 18-22. These students learn valuable life skills and our Library benefits from their great work and delicious beverages.

**District 303 Student & Teacher cards:** SCPL provides library cards to teachers and all District 303 students who reside outside of Library District boundaries. This is made possible through an intergovernmental agreement with the school district and is to the mutual benefit of our agencies. Last year, over 700 students received these special non-resident cards.



**Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA):** The Library provides regular on-site programming to people enrolled in FVSRA. This includes hands-on activities as well as a book discussion led by one of our staff members who is nationally certified to lead a book club for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

**Literacy Volunteers Fox Valley (LVFV):** This organization provides trained volunteer tutors to adults hoping to increase their English language

proficiency. The Library provides a dedicated study room to LVFV and shares office space with its Program Coordinator. This program brings new people into the Library and supports one of our foundational roles in providing a space for lifelong learning.

**SWAN:** This organization provides a shared library services platform that allows St. Charles cardholders to access and check out materials from over 100 other libraries in Illinois. SWAN provides automation of library tasks including a shared online catalog, interlibrary loan, patron database maintenance, materials acquisition, and serials control. Members pool their financial resources to participate in one of the largest systems in the world with over 1.5 million titles and 8 million items.

**RAILS:** SCPL is a member of the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) along with over 400 other libraries. This is a State funded system that supports resource sharing among members. RAILS provides delivery of the materials ordered through the SWAN catalog. They also offer continuing education, discounts on electronic materials, opportunities for collaboration and networking, and more. Significant savings are realized from the collaboration between RAILS and vendors who offer services to libraries. This valuable membership is free to our Library and makes a tremendous difference in the daily impact we have on our cardholders.

**Library Volunteers:** The Library has a strong and talented group of paid staff members, however, work is supplemented by the generous efforts of our Library volunteers. These



individuals come to the Library on a regular basis to help provide collection maintenance, lend a hand during large events, and provide assistance wherever needed.

**Friends of St. Charles Public Library:** The Friends were founded 45 years ago with the intention of raising funds to help support the SCPL. Through their ongoing book sale and two large sales each year, the Friends are able to offer money for programming, staff appreciation and development, the summer reading program, and new art pieces. The Friends are made up entirely of volunteers who give hours of their time weekly to help sort book donations for their sales.

**St. Charles Library Foundation:** The Foundation supports the patrons and staff of the Library by providing supplemental funds for programming, capital projects, and new equipment and furniture. Their funds are raised through events like trivia nights and author talks, as well their annual appeal letter. This volunteer run organization is led by a board of directors who reside locally and donate their time to enhance Library services.

**Intergovernmental Meetings:** On a monthly basis, St. Charles area governmental entities meet to discuss local issues and collaborate. Representatives are present from our Library, the City of St. Charles, the Park District, the Township, Kane County Forest Preserve, and Kane County. These meetings have been the origin for several successful partnerships and help build relationships among the taxing bodies.

**Arts Council:** The St. Charles Arts Council meets in the Library on a regular basis. SCPL has a highly sought after gallery space on the main floor that different artists and organizations can use for a period of one month. This adds beauty and culture to the building while helping to showcase local talent. A free, community gallery space like ours does not exist anywhere else in town.

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church:** The Library and St. Mark's Church are located right next to each other and share a parking lot. We share the cost of annual snow plowing and any repairs to the parking lot and in exchange St. Mark's parishioners use our parking lot on Sundays and for preschool drop-off. They also planted one of our raised beds this year which brought added beauty and enjoyment to our grounds.

**Off-Site Drop Boxes:** Due to the size of our District, people may not be in our immediate area on a regular basis; the Library is pleased to offer residents of the District five different locations where they can return materials. The presence of off-site book returns is a convenience to our residents and we are able to offer this through the community businesses and government agencies who allow us to position a book drop for free on their property.



## **GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY**

SCPL publishes an annual report following the conclusion of each fiscal year. This is done to show financial transparency, service outcomes, and to document highlights and achievements. The Library also participates in the Illinois Public Library Annual Report (IPLAR) which is reviewed by the Board and submitted to the State every September.

Currently, the Library subscribes to OpenGov, a software which serves as a transparency portal for public inspection of Library data. On a monthly basis, managers report the usage statistics of their department and upload a link to charts and graphs that allow people to explore the data further. In addition, a Staff Report is published in the monthly Board packet which includes highlights and important information for the Board to review.

SCPL continues to offer excellent return on investment of local tax dollars. Based on the 2022 levies filed by local governments in our taxing district, the Library represents less than 4% of a homeowner's tax bill.

An audit of Library financial statements is completed by a government accounting firm at the conclusion of each fiscal year. This audit is presented to the Board at an open meeting and approved by a roll call vote. The audit is then available for public inspection both in person and on the Library's website. A notice of the availability of the audit is published in a local newspaper.

The Library website contains numerous other links and reports of the activities happening in the Library throughout the year. A link to the total compensation for employees earning over \$75,000 per year is placed on the website along with links to Board meeting agendas, minutes, contact information for staff and trustees, the annual budget, and more.

## **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The following areas were identified in the most recent strategic plan as areas for development and growth.

**District Expansion:** The Library's district boundaries are directly adjacent to the unserved community of Campton Hills, IL. Residents of this town can purchase non-resident library cards on an annual basis. Previous efforts to pass a referendum for bringing Campton Hills into the District have failed. Based on the usage of our Library by residents of this area, we believe further investigation should be done to determine the feasibility of a pop-up branch nearer to Campton Hills that might result in residents joining the District.

**Engagement with Non-Users:** Our Board and staff should consider how to expand outreach to those who do not currently use the Library and promote the valuable resources available to all residents. Since all residents are taxpayers, we believe they would benefit from learning about the Library resources and being encouraged to use them.

**Data Driven Practices:** Use available data to bring about collection changes that are aligned with community wants and needs as well as right-sizing the physical collection in the Library building. This will reduce unnecessary spending and increase the return on investment that patrons get for the items we purchase.

**Develop increased programs for diversity, discovery, and learning:** Our already robust program offerings could be expanded to offer increased events that reach a wider audience. Taking into account the many different people we serve in a district of almost 56,000, we want to be welcoming and representative of all populations in our service area.

**Ensure comfortable, accessible, efficient physical spaces for all:** The Library building underwent a major renovation in 2020-2021. This resulted in a beautiful and well-used space for the public. We continue to prioritize ways we can accommodate more people and also maintain a high level of access and comfort for those who are here.

**Organizational strength:** This includes supporting staff, establishing better communication systems, improved training and onboarding, and responsibly using resources. We want to focus on transparency and good fiscal stewardship while also ensuring we have strong systems in place to support Library employees.

## **FINAL STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY**

Whether using the space for studying, working, tutoring, checking out materials, creating projects in STC Creative, or meeting with other parents and children for a playdate at the Library, SCPL is a place that welcomes everyone. With a vibrant staff, relevant resources, and innovative services being offered, the St. Charles Public Library continues to be the heart of the community.

The committee recognizes that there are always ways for organizations to improve and offer increased value and benefits for the populations they serve. SCPL is committed to transparency, efficiency, excellence, and a community-focused mission that makes for a meaningful library experience. The new strategic plan sets an ambitious course for the next 3 – 5 years and the staff are eager to take on new challenges and projects.

With usage statistics being on the rise since the end of the pandemic, we believe our resources are being used more than ever and taxpayer's investments offer high value for the average resident.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve the community of St. Charles and look forward to what lies ahead.