

Good afternoon, City Manager Platt and Team,

Last week, our staff received a request to provide testimony to the City Council's Finance Committee, tomorrow, August 13, 2024, specifically related to the impacts of housing insecurity and homelessness on the Kansas City Public Library, our services, and ability to deliver on our core mission to serve the Kansas City community.

As a former Deputy City and County Manager for the City and County of Broomfield, I highly value our partnership with the City – both our elected officials and city staff – and wanted to ensure you had a copy of the statement that will be included as part of tomorrow's testimony by Beth Hill, Community Resource Manager.

Kansas City Public Library statement on housing insecurity

The Kansas City Public Library serves all in the community, increasingly serving those facing the most pressing challenges, including housing insecurity. Each day, our libraries offer refuge and information individuals need who are seeking basic human needs – needs that a low barrier shelter can offer---a place to sleep, food, access to restrooms or bathing facilities, or simply safety. Interactions between patrons and Library staff continue to reveal the harsh realities of housing instability, affecting individuals and families, and our libraries and our ability to deliver on our mission.

Currently, the Library dedicates significant staff time and financial resources to address the immediate needs of our unhoused patrons. As we all know, even the most dedicated of public servants feel the emotional strain when their assistance can only do so much for someone in need. And while we remain committed to being a partner in this work, it highlights the broader, more pressing issue: our community's lack of sufficient resources. It is a burden that cannot be sustained.

A low-barrier shelter would be transformative for our community, offering safe sleep, access to food, hygiene products, and essential holistic support services. The resources are not just necessary; they are urgent. Without them, the strain on the Library and other community partners will only continue to grow, further exacerbating challenges of safety and well-being for both unhoused individuals and the community at large.

A low-barrier shelter is essential, not just for the Library and its ability to deliver on our core mission for all, but for the health and well-being of our entire community.

Supporting Statistics:

- Over 4,500 interactions with unhoused individuals at KCPL in 2024, averaging 600 per month.
- 1,598 food-related interactions this year, averaging 228 per month.
- 886 personal care interactions, including hygiene and clothing, averaging 126 per month.
- 215 housing/shelter-related interactions, averaging 31 per month.

It was great meeting Kimiko last week at the grand opening of The Nook. We appreciated her being in attendance to represent the City of Kansas City. And please don't hesitate to reach out if you all have time to connect for coffee or lunch. I would love that.

And thank you for the opportunity to share this information ahead of tomorrow's meeting and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Abby



Abby Yellman
Library Director and Chief Executive
Kansas City Public Library

Office: 816.701.3601

AbbyYellman@kclibrary.org

KCLibrary.org