

Scenario Planning Final Project: Literally Literacy in the Motor City

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Community Description: Detroit, Michigan

Detroit (Metro Detroit) is a city in southeastern Michigan, comprising an area of 138.7 square miles, and is located on the border between the United States and Canada (Wikipedia, 2021, Appendix: Figure 1). With a population of 674,841 individuals (United States Census Bureau, 2019), it is the largest city in Michigan.

Economic and Business Data

Detroit is also known as the “Motor City” owing to the car manufacturing industry, including General Motors and Ford. However, in 2008 this city was heavily affected by the recession, suffering a negative growth rate by 25% over 10 years, as a result of many individuals moving away in search of employment as a result of job and economic loss in the area (Wikipedia, 2021). To overcome this, many initiatives were developed by the City of Detroit to stimulate the area (Mazzola, 2021). With gentrification and urban renewal of the city, many companies have been moving from the suburbs to downtown and midtown areas (Wikipedia, 2021). For example, the construction of Little Caesars arena has resulted in the development of new shops and restaurants, in addition to the development of new office towers and high-end condominiums. However, this has also resulted in the displacement of local long-time residents, and consequently, a loss of this culture and history (Wikipedia, 2021).

The average household income is \$30,894, and more than half of the city’s population is unemployed, with an employment rate of 45.9%. In addition, the poverty rate is 35.0% (United States Census Bureau, 2019). To help alleviate the poverty and revitalize the city, the city of Detroit has collaborated with several organizations to revitalize business, as well as develop

recreational and open areas, to encourage tourism, and provide a safe and clean place for families to enjoy in their neighborhoods. These areas include the Detroit River Walk, Campus Martius Park, Dequindre Cut Greenway, and Green Alleys (Wikipedia, 2019).

Demographic Data

The population of Metro Detroit is mostly between the ages of 18 and 65 (75%), with 7.2% less than 5 years old, and 13.6% older than 65 years old (United States Census Bureau, 2019; Appendix: Figure 2). Furthermore, this population comprises 78.3% Black or African American individuals, followed by 14.7% White individuals, with the remainder of the population comprising Asian and Hispanic individuals (United States Census Bureau, 2019; Appendix: Figure 3). The home language of most individuals is English (88.7%), followed by Spanish (6.5%) (United States Census Bureau, 2019; Appendix: Figure 4). Of the total population, 19.2% are considered to have a disability, including hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulties (United States Census Bureau, 2019; Appendix: Figure 5). Thirty three percent of the population has attained a High School Diploma, and 25.7% have been to college, but have not graduated; 9.1% have Bachelor's degrees, and 7.5% have Associate's degrees. Only 6.2% of the population have Graduate or Professional degrees ((United States Census Bureau, 2019; Appendix: Figure 6). There are 53,406 students enrolled in the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD), with 106 schools serving pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. Furthermore, the DPSCD has over 200 community partners (Detroit Public Schools Community District, 2021).

Political Information

The city obtains revenue primarily from property tax, but also levies a 2.65%, 1.325%, and 1.6% income tax on residents, non-residents, and corporations, respectively (Wikipedia, 2021). To further enhance revenue, there is a planned reduction in the workforce, and consolidation of operations (Wikipedia, 2021). In addition, Governor Whitmer has recently announced that some of the federal Covid-19 relief funds will be used for affordable housing to address the housing need, particularly in Detroit, with further leveraging of private capital to maximize this (Boucher, 2021).

Social Issues

The major social issues facing Detroit Metro are unemployment, poverty, and crime (Wikipedia, 2021). Although there is gentrification and urban renewal to address the urban decay, there are still areas of abandonment and neglect in the city. In addition, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified some of the issues surrounding poverty and racial and socioeconomic inequities (Wayland et al., 2020).

Library

The [Detroit Public Library](#) comprises a main branch, 21 neighborhood branches, and a mobile library. The mission of the library is to enlighten and empower people through the provision of diverse and dynamic pathways to literacy and learning (Detroit Public Library, 2021). Library operations are funded by a dedicated millage, in addition to grants and donations. The libraries provide literacy support; various services, including but not limited to career and employment help and computer and technology classes; and resources for blind and physically

disadvantaged members; and they hold several special collections and archives. In addition, there is programming for children from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 in dedicated areas, as well as online resources. The mobile library provides physical and digital resources, programming, and free Wi-Fi, operating in areas with minimal resources. The operating budget of the Detroit Public Library is \$35,466,670 for 2021, with a total of 327 full- and part-time employees (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021, Appendix: Figure 7). However, this decreases from 2022, to \$27,835,308 with a major cut in Salaries (Appendix: Figure 8), although there is not a proposed reduction in staff, but a restructuring. Most of the remaining budget stays the same through 2025 (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021, Appendix: Figure 9).

As defined by Koontz (2003), anyone or group with a vested interest in the library can be a stakeholder. Therefore, the primary Detroit Public Library Stakeholders can be identified as the County Taxpayers, Library Users, Fee-Paying Users, Potential Library Users, Library Leadership, Library Staff, Volunteer Library Staff, Funding Agencies, Media, Detroit Library Commission, Detroit Public Library Foundation. The stakeholders with the most power include the County Taxpayers, since the library millage depends on their vote as well as property taxes, and library funding depends directly on this. Therefore, in addition Media would also have relatively high power since they have the ability to influence these voters and taxpayers by how they portray the library, and whether they portray the library's services as best serving the interests of the community. The Library Leadership is also a powerful stakeholder, providing fundamental guidance and strategy for the library, as well as accountability. The Detroit Public Library Foundation is an additional high-power stakeholder, since they are an independent fund-granting organization, with potential political benefit, and they could potentially disagree with the ultimate mission of the library should they have a different agenda.

Strategic Plans

The strategic plan of Detroit Metro as outlined by Detroit Future City (2016) provides a framework for the sustainable development and use of land and infrastructure, the creation of jobs, economic prosperity, and vibrant communities, all of which will ensure community success. The goal of the strategic plan is to enhance the quality of life for all those living in Metro Detroit through partnerships with communities and stakeholders. The plan is based on aspirational, transformative, inclusive, and equitable core values (Detroit Future City, 2016), and is broken down into specific strategies surrounding land use and sustainability, community engagement, community and economic development, and organizational goals.

The strategic plan of the Detroit Public Library includes serving as a “community partner for addressing literacy needs”; hosting “literary events and civic engagement”; ensuring that services are provided to meet community needs; maintaining, upgrading, and developing available technologies; creating services that appeal to the community to ensure these services do not become redundant; ensuring the maintenance and sustainable development of the library’s infrastructure; and ensuring the financial sustainability of the library for future users (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021, p. 4).

A look into the future

Based on the community description of Detroit, Michigan, several trends could be identified. These include, but are not limited to, a continually declining population, urban renewal, a predominantly working-class population, and most of the population being working class between the ages of 18 and 65. In addition, there is a high level of unemployment and poverty that has been exacerbated by the impact of the corona virus pandemic.

Major community trends

Three of the major trends impacting this community include a decreasing population, urban renewal, and predominantly working-class population.

Decreasing population

The population of Detroit has been decreasing steadily since 2010 (Aguilar, 2020), mostly as a result of the 2008 recession, with many individuals in the community moving away to find jobs elsewhere (Wikipedia, 2021). However, the population is still decreasing year on year, although at a lower rate. As a result of the population decreasing, many houses and businesses in the city have been abandoned, resulting in urban decay (Wikipedia, 2021). In addition, many services to these areas have been minimized, with only basic services being carried out by the city. Some of this urban decay has been as a result of fewer taxpayers contributing to the local economy.

Urban renewal

Despite the decreasing population and urban decay, considerable effort has been placed in urban renewal and gentrification in an effort to revitalize the city (Wikipedia, 2021). The urban renewal is an ongoing process, in collaboration and partnership with many different organizations and institutions in an attempt to uplift communities and revitalize neighborhoods by creating safe community places for families. However, as noted previously, this urban renewal has resulted in the displacement of many long-time residents, sometimes to areas with limited resources (Wikipedia, 2021), including public transport, shops, schools, and libraries.

Working-class population

Much of the community within Detroit is working class, with less than 6.2% of the population holding Graduate or Professional Degrees (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

It has been determined that this community will generally have limited opportunities, either through education or employment, to enhance their circumstances (Manstead, 2018), predominantly resulting in socioeconomic inequalities.

Library strategic plan

The strategic plan of the library has been analyzed to determine if it adequately addresses the community trends described above.

Decreasing population

With the decreasing population there is a threat of reduced funding for the library, and library resources. The strategic plan of the library addresses this through the goal of developing financial sustainability for the library (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021). However, although this is stated as a goal, and the budget for the library for the next five years are included, there is no direct plan or steps that have been articulated in this plan. To enhance the strategic plan of the library, it would be useful to itemize the steps that will be taken to ensure financial sustainability, the first of which is to ensure financial accountability (Abraham, 2003).

Urban renewal

The strategic plan of the library addresses urban renewal, with mention of plans to maintain and develop the library's infrastructure. However, this could be further addressed through specific programming involving the community for their benefit. In addition, clear steps towards this goal have not been outlined in the strategic plan. For example, with the unusual high rainfall that occurred in Detroit in July 2021, the main library suffered extensive flood damage in the basement (Detroit Public Library, 2021). Although this was a city-wide problem, going forward, a clear annual maintenance plan and associated policies within the strategic plan, in addition to the budget, should be included to ensure this will not happen again, or at least if there

is a chance of it happening again, that extensive damage could be mitigated. If this is budgeted for and clearly articulated, then funding will not have to be directed to this in the case of an emergency, diverting possible funding intended for urban renewal programming that will benefit the community. In addition, the strategic plan should also include specific plans for mobile services, including information, technological services, and the provision of Wi-Fi to reach those displaced by the gentrification programs.

Working-class population

The needs of the working-class community have been inadequately addressed in the strategic plan. There is mention of the development of community partnerships to help address the needs of the community regarding literacy, which would help to ensure the accessibility of information and resources to address some of the current socioeconomic inequalities that exist. However, although this has been stated generally in the strategic plan, it could be more clearly articulated. The strategic plan should have clear steps as to how community literacy will be enhanced, by including specific programming planned and services offered. Specific programming goals could be included in the strategic plan regarding reading and literacy starting first with children, such as preschool and summer reading programs, for example. These could also be developed for teenagers and adults. In addition, literacy and technology programming could be stipulated in the plan for adults to enhance their skills.

Scenario planning – Literally Literacy in the Motor City

Based on the community description and trends identified in the community, the following scenarios have been developed:

Scenario 1 – Literally literacy: Revving the motor

With a continually decreasing population, and the likelihood of funding either staying the same or being reduced, in this scenario it would be prudent to ensure that the current library programming is maintained, while still planning for the expansion of programs, especially programming around literacy for both children and adults. The current programming, including the “Technology Literacy Centers (TLC) for literacy, which include workforce development, technology training and access, lifelong learning and GED testing” (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021, p. 2) should be further developed to be rolled out to some of the branches, in addition to the main branch. Furthermore, the early and teen literacy programs should also be rolled out to some of the branches. With this expansion of the program with limited funds, the community should be engaged in marketing through social media using photographs and hashtags as word-of-mouth promotion.

To ensure that the community’s needs are being met, additional Wi-Fi infrastructure should be developed at each of the branches to support online literacy programming, including reading programs for children.

It is fundamental that community outreach is continued with the more vulnerable communities to ensure they are benefitting from the programming in place for them. In addition, time should be spent ensuring this programming is meeting the needs of this community, and adjust it where necessary, focusing primarily on adult literacy.

It is necessary that steps are clearly developed to ensure financial stability and sustainability going forward, so the programs that are already in existence are maintained. In this regard, the budget should be carefully analyzed by a budgetary taskforce to ensure that the expenditure within each category is within the budgetary means, and suggestions should be made

for improvement. Specific actions should be developed around these suggestions, which should then be acted on, and then evaluated. In addition, regarding financial stability, the maintenance of the library infrastructure should be considered, and clear plans developed to ensure that the infrastructure is maintained to ensure the services and programs developed can be maintained in the long term to achieve the literacy goals.

Scenario 2 – Literally literacy: Motoring to the 'burbs

In this scenario, the budgetary taskforce has identified the redirection of potential funding, making more funding available for programing needs. In addition to all the current services and programming offered, with these increased resources, the literacy programing could be further developed, to be more comprehensive across communities, primarily with the expansion of the mobile library. In addition to growing the fleet of vehicles, the programing that the mobile services offer could also be increased. In addition, with the expansion of the mobile services, the potential Wi-Fi expansion would also increase, providing hotspot accessibility to those in the community displaced through the urban renewal programs. This would also allow for increased online accessibility to the library services and resources and additional programing surrounding literacy, helping to make the community more self-sufficient through fundamental literacy and critical thinking skills development.

Scenario 3 – Literally literacy: Motoring all out

In this scenario, in addition to the above mentioned developments of Scenarios 1 and 2, a taskforce dedicated to community outreach and grant writing would be established. This would have positive outcomes developing community partnerships and collaborations, particularly with potential funding agencies invested in the community. This would allow for the further development of literacy programs, in conjunction with science, technology, engineering, arts,

and mathematics (STEAM) programs for school-going children from Pre-K to Grade 12. Examples of this could be through STEAM workshops, both in person and online; take-home STEAM kits with downloadable instructions from the DPL website; and online resources supporting these initiatives. The STEAM kits could be provided by community partnerships, while supporting local businesses. This programming would also be available through the expanded mobile libraries, ensuring that previously underserved areas now have access to this, through both resources, and the availability of Wi-Fi and internet. In addition, community developed displays relating to the STEAM programming could be set up in the community areas surround the libraries that have been uplifted by the urban renewal, further advertising these resources, and encouraging family and community participation in these resources. This programming will ultimately uplift the community, while meeting the community's needs, and enhancing literacy and skills development.

Conclusion

These scenarios build on each other, and are incrementally dependent on funding. Scenario 3 would be the ultimate goal of the DPL, meeting the needs of the community regarding literacy as well as STEAM, simultaneously considering the major trends in the community. This programming will ensure that the benefits and services of the DPL reach as far into the community as possible through the expansion of the mobile library and resources. Since most of this community is working class, probably with limited time for the library, the mobile services will ensure that these services are reaching their families, and through the tutoring program, that these children are equipped with the literacy skills they require to become critically thinking, literate individuals.

Appendix

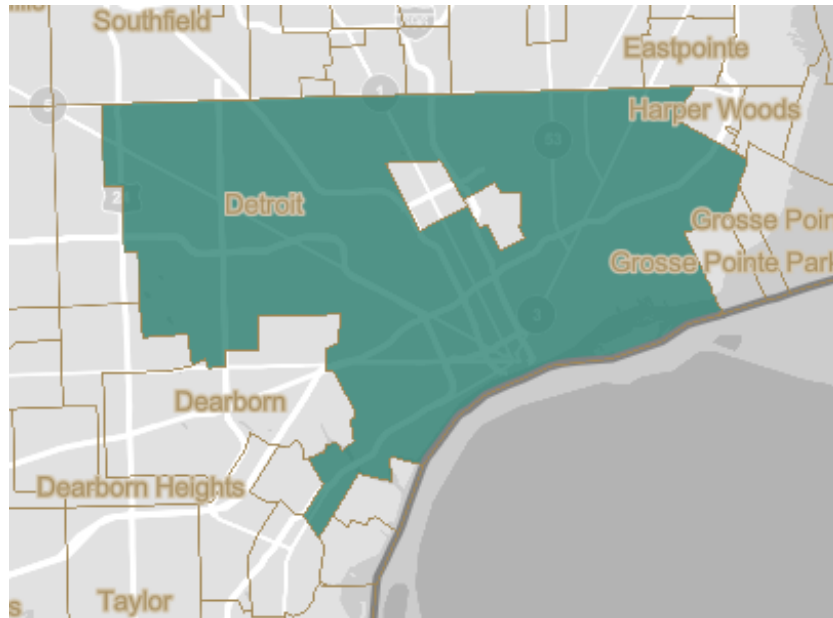


Figure 1: Detroit, Michigan highlighted in green, on the Detroit River bordering the United States and Canada (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

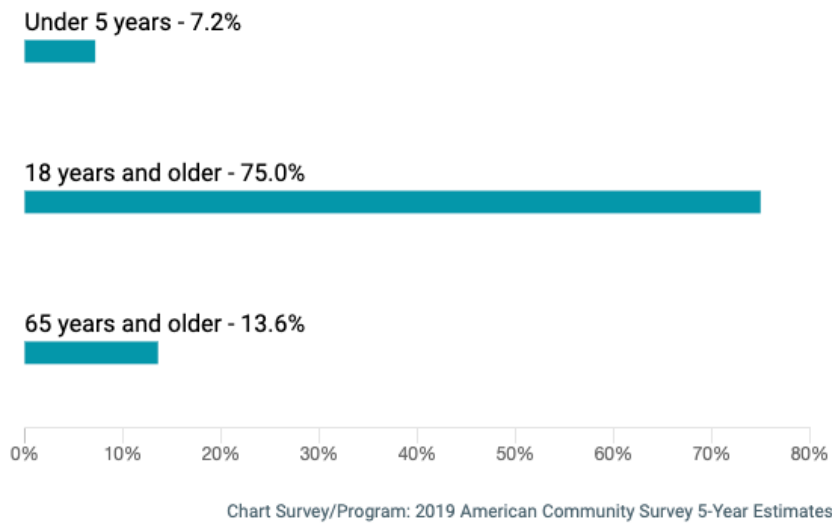


Figure 2. Age distribution of the population within Detroit, Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

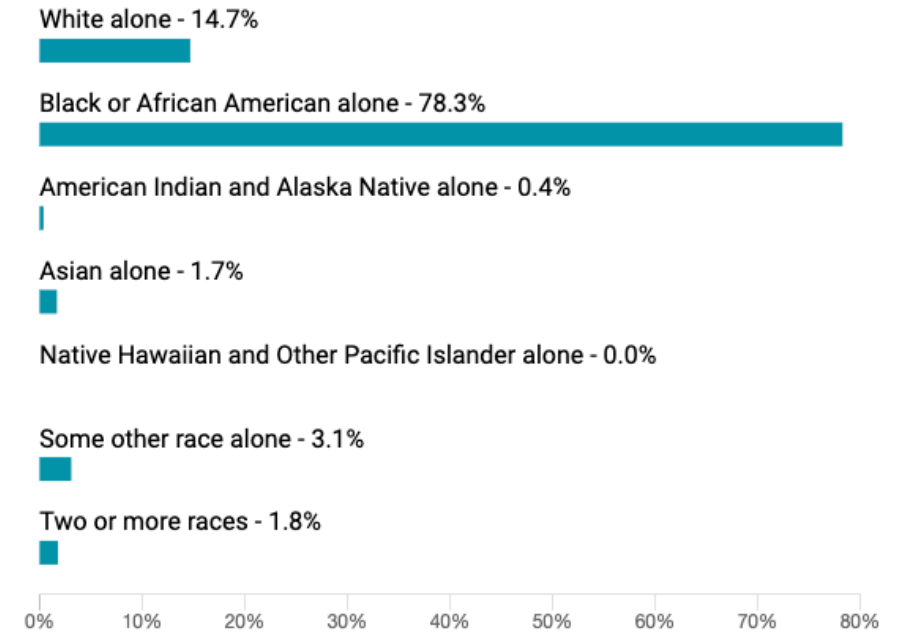


Figure 3. Ethnicity in Detroit, Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

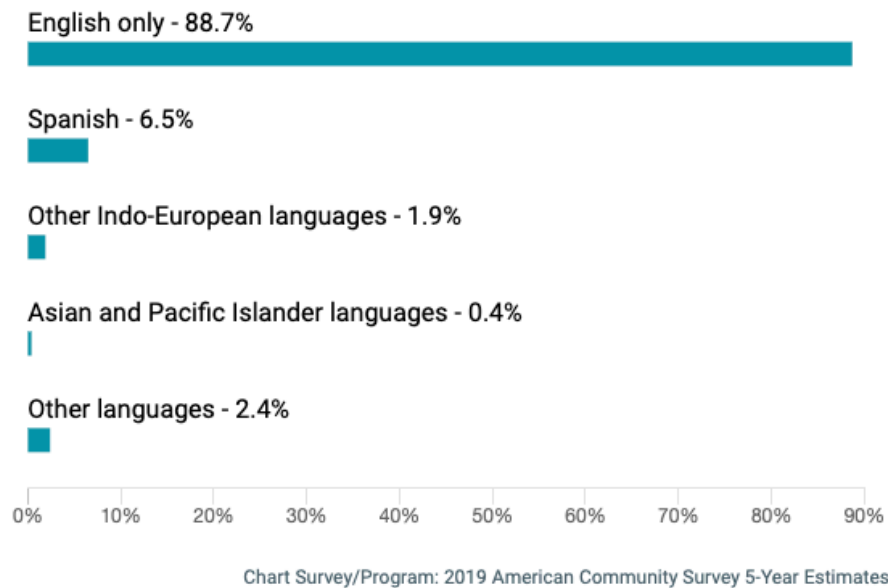


Figure 4. Home language breakdown in Detroit, Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

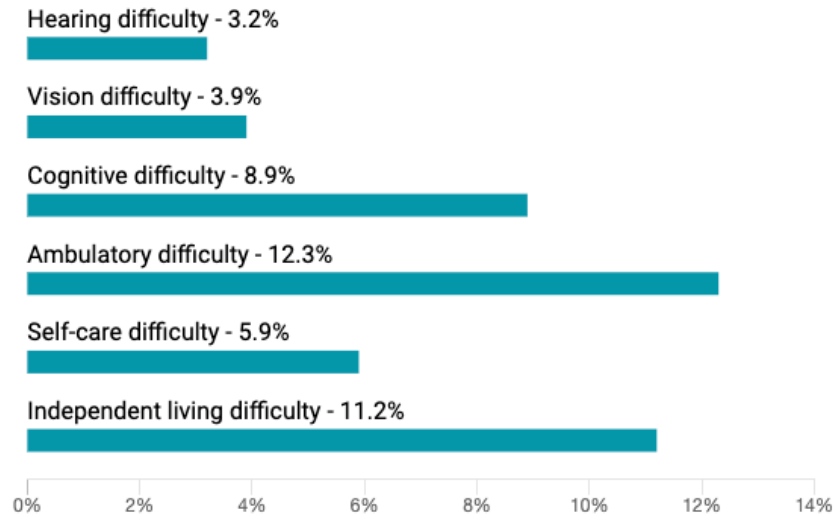


Figure 5. Types of disabilities within the disabled population in Detroit, Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

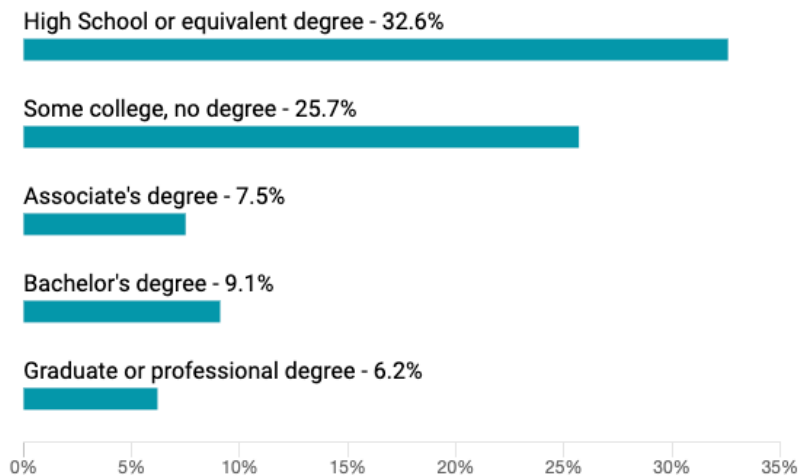


Figure 6. Level of education attained within the community of Detroit, Michigan (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

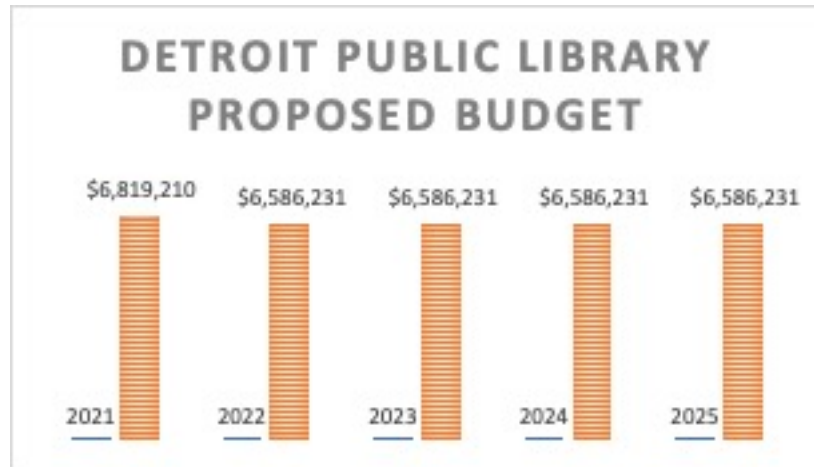


Figure 7. Proposed budget of the Detroit Public Library for the next five years (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021).



Figure 8. Proposed salaries of the Detroit Public Library for the next five years (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021).

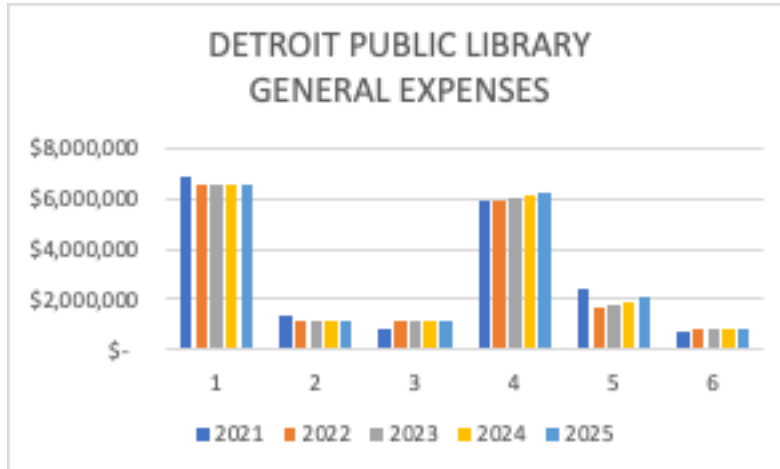


Figure 9. General expenses of the Detroit Public Library for the next five years. 1. Employee Benefits, 2. Professional & Contractual Services, 3. Operating Supplies, 4. Operating Services, 5. Equipment Acquisition, 6. Fixed Charges (City of Detroit Michigan, 2021).

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