



**Report for Compliance with  
Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act**

**LIBRARY INFORMATION**

Name: Wilmette Public Library District (WPLD)  
Location: 1242 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091  
County: Cook  
Type of Library: District, 7 member independently elected Board of Trustees  
Population served: 28,180  
# of Employees: 90 (50 FTE)

**FINANCIAL AND BUDGET INFORMATION**

Fiscal Year: July 1 – June 30  
FY2023-24 Budget: \$6,398,247  
EAV: \$2,412,377,707 (tax year 2023, the most recent year available)

**COMMITTEE INFORMATION**

Per 50 ILCS 70/10(b), the committee membership must include all the elected or appointed members of the library board of trustees, the Executive Director or other official of the Library, and two residents appointed by the President of the Library Board of Trustees.

Committee: Joan Fishman, Board President and Decennial Committee Chair  
MaryAnne O’Keefe, Board Vice President  
Maria Di Lorenzo, Board Secretary  
Tracy Sommer, Board Treasurer  
Renee Cox, Trustee  
Trish Nealon, Trustee  
Carolyn Sennett, Trustee  
Eric Bederman, Resident  
Linda Diekman, Resident  
Anthony Auston, Executive Director

Meeting Dates: May 16, 2023 - formation of committee and first meeting  
February 20, 2024 - compile information and data; prepare draft report  
October 28, 2024 - preview draft report with committee residents  
November 19, 2024 - review final report; approve for submission

## CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Wilmette Public Library uses *Serving Our Public 4.0: Standards for Illinois Public Libraries* as a guide for staff and the Library Board of Trustees during annual budget preparation and in the development and implementation of our strategic plan. *Serving Our Public 4.0* outlines standards in several areas: Core Standards; Governance and Administration; Personnel; Access; Building Infrastructure and Maintenance; Safety; Collection Management; System Member Responsibilities and Resource Sharing; Public Services: Reference and Reader's Advisory Services; Programming; Youth/Young Adult Services; Technology; and Marketing, Promotion, and Collaboration. The Library meets/exceeds all standards and provides the following core programs and services:

- Operates in compliance with Illinois library law and all other statutory requirements.
- Curates, develops, and maintains an organized collection of materials and information, including print resources such as books, magazines, newspapers; electronic materials including ebooks, eaudiobooks, database subscriptions, and streaming content; and other physical collections such as DVDs, CDs, video games, and Library of Things.
- Provides access to shared content (print and digital resources) through membership in the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS), Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) shared online catalog, and Digital Library of Illinois (DLIL) shared e-resource catalog.
- Recruits, hires, trains, supervises, coaches, develops, and evaluates qualified paid staff to manage and maintain all library collections, operations, and services. Such services include provision of assistance to patrons in the use of our collections and resources and in the use of resources beyond those owned by WPLD through interlibrary loan and other resource-sharing arrangements, as well as reference and reader's advisory services for all ages.
- Provides extensive outcome-based programming for all ages, including early literacy programming, story times, STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) related programming, as well as a diverse range of programs for school age children, teens, adults, seniors, and other demographic affinity groups
- Provides community gathering and meeting spaces.

In addition to the core services and programs outlined above, Wilmette Public Library provides a growing range of value-added services, including Notary and social support referral services.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Wilmette Public Library has been nationally recognized as a *Library Journal* "Star Library", earning its highest honor of 5 Stars for the past 4 consecutive years for extraordinary statistical output measures per capita. *Library Journal*, the oldest and most respected library service publication, analyzes and indexes data from public libraries nationwide to recognize American public libraries and improve the pool of nationally collected library

statistics. The Star Library review provides quantitative analysis of library performance in seven key areas—per capita circulation of physical materials, number of visitors, e-circulation, public computer use, program attendance, Wi-Fi sessions, and e-retrievals— to compare libraries within their peer groups nationally. Wilmette performs particularly well in several categories, with notably high performance in the digital realm: e-circulation and Wi-Fi sessions were among the highest among peer libraries. Wilmette also performs well in overall circulation (27.18 per capita) and program attendance (1.23 per capita).

- Staff are active in state and national library associations and elevate the services they provide to the community through participation in committees, conferences, continuing education, and ongoing training and certifications.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS / GROUP PURCHASES**

Wilmette Public Library partners with or has intergovernmental agreements with the following governmental units or other taxpayer funded entities:

**Kenilworth Public Library District (KPLD)** - KPLD was organized and established under Illinois law in 1983, and established its first contractual Library Service Agreement with Wilmette Public Library District (WPLD) and Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District (WNPLD) in accordance with the Illinois Public Library District Act on May 24, 1984 (5 ILCS 220/5 and 75 ILCS 16/30-55.40). Through these continuous agreements, KPLD has been able to extend library services to Kenilworth residents without the need establish funds and covenants to build or maintain a library facility, hire and sustain appropriate staff, build and maintain collections, or otherwise perform the regular administrative and operational functions necessary to meet the Standards for Illinois Public Libraries. Through KPLD, residents of Kenilworth enjoy equal benefits of library membership at their choice of either Wilmette Public Library or Winnetka-Northfield Public Library (and their consortial partners), as though they were resident taxpayers of those communities. As concluded by their own Decennial Local Government Efficiency Committee, KPLD is essentially the perfect model of local government efficiency, providing a number of necessary services to the community with a relatively small budget and tax levy, as leveraged exclusively through a contractual agreement with 2 other library districts and their partners.

**Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)** - RAILS is a regional library system, a government agency that provides services to libraries in the northern and west-central areas of the State of Illinois. RAILS has approximately 1,250 private, public, school, and university library members, which have a total of more than 4,000 library facilities in a 27,000 square mile area. RAILS was formed in 2011, from a merger of the Alliance, DuPage, Metropolitan, North Suburban, and Prairie Area library systems.

As a member of RAILS, Wilmette Public Library has access to a number of services, including:

- interlibrary delivery
- continuing education and consulting resources to library employees and trustees

- shared catalog and cataloging support
- e-content services
- museum and attractions pass program
- group purchases and vendor discounts
- networking opportunities for library employees
- targeted grant funding to member libraries

Having access to these shared services through RAILS allows the district to better serve the residents of Wilmette and Kenilworth in a variety of ways, as outlined below.

- *Supporting/Expanding Resource Sharing*

No one library can afford to purchase all of the materials its patrons need. RAILS supports six shared online catalogs. A shared online catalog allows patrons from participating libraries to search all participating library catalogs in a single search. 437 libraries in RAILS belong to one of these six consortia.

Wilmette Public Library is a member of the Cooperative Computer Services (CCS) consortium. Kenilworth residents have access to the holdings of 31 libraries in the north suburban area. They can request materials to be delivered to any library of their choice via the RAILS Delivery service.

- *Sharing E-Resources*

RAILS' eRead Illinois service is a cooperative program that expands access to ebooks for Illinois residents. Currently, approximately 800 Illinois libraries of all types participate.

RAILS' Explore More Illinois program allows library cardholders from across the state to reserve free and discounted admission, parking, and gift store purchases from a wide variety of Illinois cultural and recreational attractions. Currently, 422 Illinois libraries participate and there are 66 attractions.

- *Collaboration/Networking*

RAILS makes it possible for staff from 3,699 libraries across a 27,000 square mile area to share possible solutions to common challenges, as well as best practices. This prevents every individual library from having to "recreate the wheel."

RAILS has over 50 email discussion lists on a wide variety of topics and for almost every staff position at a public library and over 96 networking groups that meet in person or via Zoom. Wilmette Public Library staff participate in these email discussion and networking groups as appropriate to their positions and job responsibilities.

- *Continuing Education/Consulting*

RAILS offers a variety of in-person and virtual continuing education (CE) workshops to help staff keep their skills up to date and to stay on top of the different trends affecting library service. RAILS has offered over 1,000 CE events with 37,908 attendees since 2013.

Staff attend these events as appropriate to their positions and job responsibilities.

All Illinois public libraries can use the RAILS FOIA/OMA hotline to receive free assistance from an attorney with basic questions on the Freedom of Information Act or Open Meetings Act. This saves each individual library from having to pay an attorney to answer the same basic questions.

- *Discounts to Help Libraries Save Money*

RAILS currently offers more than 50 group purchases/discounts to help libraries save money on e-resources, training, library supplies and furnishings, and more. RAILS has saved libraries over \$3.5 million since 2019. The library has regularly taken advantage of these group purchase opportunities and/or negotiated vendor discounts.

**Cooperative Computer Services (CCS)** – CCS is a group of 31 public libraries in the north and northwest suburbs of Chicago that share a database for circulation, acquisitions, cataloging, interlibrary loan, and an online public access catalog. Current CCS members include the following libraries: Algonquin Area Public Library District, Cary Area Public Library District, Crystal Lake Public Library, Des Plaines Public Library, Elmhurst Area Public Library District, Evanston Public Library, Fox River Valley Public Library District, Fremont Public Library District, Glencoe Public Library, Glenview Public Library, Grayslake Area Public Library District, Highland Park Public Library, Huntley Area Public Library District, Indian Trails Public Library District, Lake Forest Library, Lake Villa Public Library District, Lincolnwood Public Library District, McHenry Public Library District, Kenilworth Public Library, Mount Prospect Public Library, Niles-Maine District Library, Northbrook Public Library, Palatine Public Library District, Park Ridge Public Library, Prospect Heights Public Library District, Round Lake Area Public Library District, Warren-Newport Public Library District, Waukegan Public Library, Wilmette Public Library District, Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, and Zion-Benton Public Library District.

**Electronic Content Consortium (ECC)** – The ECC is a 128-library member consortium of libraries across the State of Illinois that aims to achieve economies of scale by jointly negotiating and purchasing electronic content for use by the member libraries. The ECC currently manages the Digital Library of Illinois, an OverDrive consortium that provides ebooks and eaudiobooks to the member libraries and their users. In 2023 the Digital Library of Illinois had 3,474,090 checkouts.

**Assurance/Wellness Insurance Network (WIN)** – The library participates in a group health insurance plan with 13 other libraries which helps spread the cost of insurance to a larger pool of participants.

**Libraries of Illinois Risk Agency (LIRA)** – With over 60 other library partners, the Library participates in this statewide insurance pool as an alternative to separately researching and purchasing its property, liability, and workers compensation insurance. By pooling resources with its partners, the library saves money in property and casualty premiums, and is able to leverage its buying power in the insurance market, control insurance costs, and provide dramatically improved coverage, limits, training, loss control, and overall risk management services.

**Family Action Network (FAN)** – Family Action Network is a private organization with public school, public library, and private members that fund and provide premier in-person and online events that highlight and present nationally recognized authors and speakers that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive for individual libraries to hold on their own.

**Illinois Libraries Present (ILP)** – Illinois Libraries Present is a consortium of member libraries that was formed to provide premier online events that highlight national speakers that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive for single libraries to hold on their own. This helps reduce programming costs and maximize reach by taking advantage of both virtual event platforms and the collective buying power of Illinois public libraries.

**Village of Wilmette** – Through the Village, the Library partners with multiple departments to extend its services to residents. Police provide training for library staff in public safety. The Fire Department provides training in AED/CPR, “stop the bleed”, and fire safety. The Village offers cost-effective contract parking for the Library so staff can park off-site and prioritize parking the Library parking lot for the public. The Wilmette History Museum partners with the Library to provide shared access to local history and genealogy resources and programming. Finally, the Library participates in the Village’s community French Market, promoting its services and serving as a steward/representative of the welcoming environment fostered in Wilmette.

**Wilmette Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee** –Wilmette’s recently developed ICC brings together all units of local government and affiliate organizations to work on shared goals on issues related to environmental sustainability and community mental health. The Library and its elected officials have been instrumental members of these committees, resulting in the development of a shared Sustainability Coordinator position through an intergovernmental agreement, and a community mental health awareness initiative.

**Park Districts** - The Library has partnerships with both Wilmette and Kenilworth park districts to provide services and resources to support residents of both communities. The Library partners in providing on-site storytime programs with both districts, and attends community engagement events to support shared initiatives, including the annual Block Party and summer Food Truck Mondays. The Library provides and maintains 2 StoryWalk installations in Wilmette’s Vattmann and Hibbard parks, and the park district supports the Library’s book drop at the Community Recreation Center, as well as an indoor used book exchange maintained by the affiliated Friends of the Wilmette Public Library.

**School Districts** – The Library also has agreements with a number of area schools and school districts to provide services and resources to the teachers and students of Wilmette that attend those schools, including teacher cards, curriculum resource support, shared access to digital resources, and public library card registration at the point of student registration:

- D37 Avoca West
- D37 Marie Murphy School
- D38 Joseph Sears School (Kenilworth)

- D39 Central School
- D39 Highcrest Middle School
- D39 Junior High School
- D39 McKenzie School
- D39 Romona School
- Loyola Academy
- New Trier Township High School
- St. Francis Xavier School
- St. Joseph School

**Federal, State, and County Government** - The Library supports the missions and work of broader government initiatives, including regular participation in training and compliance initiatives, partnership with the federal Census Bureau to support and promote data collection as well as hosting related workshops, Federal Reserve consumer education as part of Money Smart Week, monthly tabling space and office hours for state representatives to meet their constituents, and participation and promotion of county-wide initiatives from the Commissioner's office, such as Cook County United Against Hate.

## **OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

In addition to its government partners, the Library has partnerships with a number of local and national organizations, initiatives, affinity groups, living communities, and private schools in its efforts to advance its mission, build and bridge relationships, foster belonging and understanding, and reflect the diverse interest and needs of our community. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- ADHD, Alzheimer's, Type 1 Diabetes, and Veterans (VFW) affinity groups
- Alliance for Early Childhood
- Alliance Francais
- Backyard Nature Center
- Baker Demonstration School (private school serving children age 3 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Cove School (supporting children with complex learning disabilities from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- French Institute of the North Shore
- Go Green Wilmette
- K-9 Reading Buddies of the North Shore
- League of Women Voters / League of Women Voters of Wilmette
- Mather Place (independent senior living community)
- New Trier Peer Jury
- North Shore Coalition for Drug-Free Communities
- North Suburban Genealogical Society
- Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA)
- Northlight Theatre

- Our Place (supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities)
- SASI (non-medical home care assistance to help older adults manage everyday activities)
- SCORE (small business mentorship)
- Shakespeare Project of Chicago
- Spertus Institute (institution of higher Jewish education)
- Warming House (after school drop-in center for 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Wilmette Arts Guild
- Wilmette Garden Club
- Wilmette Harbor Rotary Club
- Wilmette-Kenilworth Chamber of Commerce
- Wilmette Theatre
- Writers Theatre
- YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
- Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook

## REVIEW PROCESS

The committee has reviewed the following, non-exhaustive list of laws, policies, training materials, and other documents related to the Library in order to prepare this report:

- WPLD budget and financial documents
- WPLD intergovernmental agreements
- WPLD monthly and annual reports
- State laws applicable to libraries
- State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (5 ILCS 430/1-1 et seq.)
- Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/1 et seq.)
- WPLD Policy on Public Comment – all policies reviewed biennially or as needed, whichever is soonest
- Designation of OMA officer (5 ILCS 120/1.05(a)) – OMA officer training completed annually
- OMA training (5 ILCS 120/1.05(b)) – all Board members have completed OMA training
- Schedule of Regular Meetings of the Library Board (5 ILCS 120/2.03)
- Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.)
- Designation of FOIA Officer (5 ILC 140/3.5(a))
- FOIA Officer Training (5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))
- Computation and Retention of FOIA Requests (5 ILCS 140 3.5(a))
- Posting Other Required FOIA Information (5 ILCS 140/4(a); 5 ILCS 140/4(b))
- Periodic Meetings to Review Closed Session Meeting Minutes (5 ILCS 120/2.06(d))
- IMRF Total Compensation Postings (5 ILCS 120/7.3)
- Designation of Whistleblower Auditing Official (50 ILCS 105/4.1 et seq.)
- Statements of Economic Interest (5 ILCS 420/4A-101; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5 et seq.) – all applicable officials have filed statements of economic interest.
- Sexual harassment prevention training (775 ILCS 5/2-109(C))



## **WHAT HAVE WE DONE WELL?**

**Conservative tax levies** - From 2014 to 2021, the Library Board either decreased the property tax levy or held it flat each year. Because the library took this approach, it saved \$8,253,908 for its taxpayers over that period of time.

**Provision of materials for education and entertainment** – In 2023-24, Wilmette Public Library circulated 664,193 physical items. Interlibrary loans received from other libraries totaled 42,899 items; interlibrary loans provided to other libraries totaled 43,601. The Library also provided access to 402,560 digital resources and electronic content uses.

**Programming** – In 2023-24, Wilmette Public Library offered 1,112 programs to 32,979 patrons.

**Increased accountability** – The Library makes available on our website the following:

- Video recordings of all Board meetings going back to June 2017 (these video recordings are available on the Library’s YouTube channel)
- All Board meeting minutes and other documents, including monthly financial information, going back to FY2015-2016
- Salaries of all employees with compensation higher than \$75,000 as required by Illinois Public Act 97-0609
- Annual approved budgets from FY2015-2016 to the present
- Annual audits from FY2015-2016 to the present
- All public facing and Library Board policies

**Improved physical spaces without having to go to referendum** – In FY2018-2019, the Library completed an exterior renovation project to improve overall access to the Library’s entrances, enhance the front lawn with seating and resources to support outdoor events and performances, beautify and expand the native garden and path, and refresh the Library’s façade. The renovation has created a safe, attractive, open, and sustainable environment to welcome the community to the Library, undertook a major renovation of our Youth Services Department and staff spaces.

In 2021, the Library completed a series of necessary capital repairs to the building, as identified in the 2020 Capital Reserve Study. Coordinated to reduce impacts to the public, the renovation is designed to address priority issues related to Building Integrity, Health/Life Safety, and Water Infiltration/Remediation, and to deliver an overall quality reinvestment in this valued community resource. The scope included extensive roof repairs, complete building envelope cleaning and tuck-pointing, exterior sealant replacement, parking lot paver repair and restriping, water infiltration mediation in the lower level, update and replacement of electrical mains, feeders, and branch panels, update and replacement of the fire alarm system, and update and replacement of the access control and security systems.

In response to demand from the 2022 community engagement survey as part of the recent strategic planning process, in 2023-24, the Library introduced its first dedicated maker space, the Studio, by repurposing interior spaces and developed entirely with staff resources and funds

included in that year's regular operating budget.

The Library was able to accomplish these projects without referendum, entirely with monies saved to reserves and/or our regular operating budget because of prudent fiscal management.

**Membership in several consortia to achieve economies of scale** – As mentioned above, the Library is a member of the CCS, ILP, ECC, and LIRA consortia, contributing a range of efficiencies and value-added services in an economy of scale.

**Revamped library services during the pandemic** – While the library building was closed to the public during the early part of the pandemic, staff safely and successfully adapted and transitioned services and programs to online and curbside, thus continuing to meet its mission and effectively utilize taxpayer funds and to provide meaningful and useful services to the community during a period of significant social, economic, and educational upheaval. The Library also utilized this environment to actualize (again with reserve funds) a long planned goal of implementing an RFID automation system to enhance operational efficiency and deliver a timely contactless circulation system during the pandemic, the benefits of which continue today. These projects and approaches allowed the Library to keep staff fully employed, eliminating the need for them to have to collect unemployment from the State of Illinois.

**Support community and area schools with educational opportunities, programming, and collections.**

**Removed barriers to service and life-long learning by eliminating overdue fines and library card expiration dates.**

## **IDENTIFIED INEFFICIENCIES/NEXT STEPS**

In general, the library is very efficient and provides a number of necessary services to the community on a comparatively small budget and tax levy. As shown in this report, the library already partners with several other government units and community organizations.

Public libraries were specifically designed to serve their local communities, this is true even in heavily populated areas with neighboring towns and libraries very close to one another. Communities have historically enjoyed the local control that having their own library (or library district) provides them. Despite the large number of public libraries in the State of Illinois, there are still a significant number of Illinois residents that do not reside in an area that receives library services (and this would be true of Kenilworth, if not for the Library Service Agreements that have extended such services to the village for the past 40 years). It can be argued that it would be better and more efficient to provide every resident of Illinois with the ability to use area libraries, perhaps similar to the community college system that currently exists in the state. However, any significant changes to address perceived inefficiencies, such as the number of libraries across the State of Illinois, would require changes to Illinois law.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER or MORE EFFICIENTLY?**

- Continue to seek out and form more community alliances and partnerships.
- Continue to work with Wilmette Park District and Village of Wilmette to provide unique programs and services, minimize duplication, and share efficiencies.
- Continue to evaluate areas of operation where appropriate consolidation, outsourcing, and/or partnerships can be leveraged for more cost effective outcomes.
- Explore the efficacy of shared staff and/or contractual employees (presenters, service providers, etc.) with area libraries and/or other taxing bodies.
- Continue to promote the Library and its services, programming, and collections to increase overall usage of the Library and to demonstrate value to taxpayers.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS for INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY and EFFICIENCY**

- Make financial and policy data more easily findable and available on the WPLD website.
- Continue to work with other libraries/agencies to share resources of all types (services, resources, staff, etc.) to achieve economies of scale.

## **REPORT PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:**

Anthony Auston, Executive Director  
Wilmette Public Library District  
October 28, 2024