

Annual Report 2020-21

In the midst of a historic pandemic, Willard Public Library served as a lifeline to the community by providing timely information and access to materials such as books, movies, and digital downloads, and offering computer resources.

The library initially shut down because of COVID-19 on March 13, 2020. Curbside service began on June 15, 2020. The library gradually added services and hours until the pandemic worsened, and the Helen Warner Branch closed on Oct. 16, 2020. A full shutdown of both locations occurred on Nov. 17, 2020, however curbside services continued. On Jan. 25, 2021, the downtown library reopened with reduced occupancy, limited hours, and guest time limits. On March 15, 2021, the Helen Warner Branch reopened. Both libraries returned to full hours on July 6, 2021.

Despite these unprecedented challenges, the library circulated more than 525,000 items, provided virtual programming for over 5,300 attendees and furnished internet access to over 12,000 public desktop users and over 56,000 wireless device users.

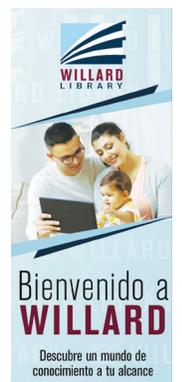
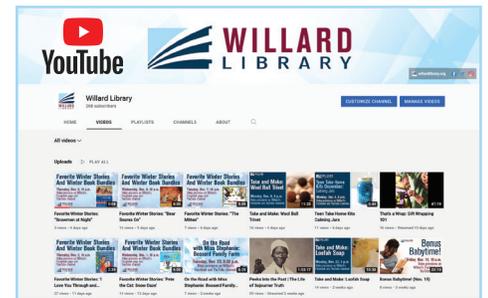
Additionally, the library's Chronicling Battle Creek suite of digitized local publications climbed to over 328,000 page views, which was a 60 percent increase over the previous year. The library increased its digital collection circulation of ebooks and downloadable audiobooks both by 8 percent.

The pandemic forced many people to go online to access critical services. The library retooled to offer much-needed technology assistance with web navigation, wireless devices, filing for unemployment benefits, and accessing Social Security services.

Willard continues to make progress toward its strategic plan goals focused on community collaboration, which included offering socially distanced study space to high school students, virtual community conversations for adults, and auditing the print collections through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The library also partnered with community organizations to bring Spanish and Burmese language programming and co-sponsored a virtual town hall meeting on redistricting. The library's change team continues to make progress in nurturing an inclusive and dynamic environment for staff.

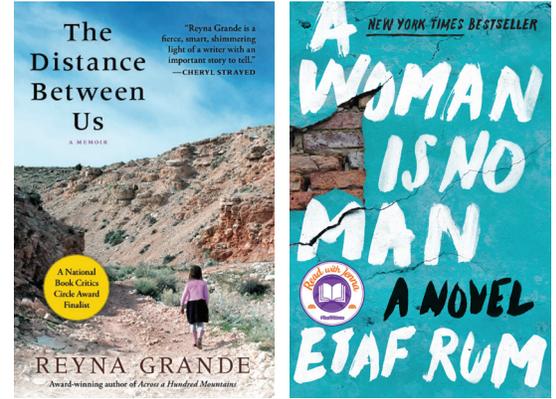
Virtual programming flourished with a variety of engaging topics. Creative programming included Take and Make Kits with crafts and DIY classes. "Stories at Sundown," a weekly interview show, and "Peeks into the Past," a monthly program featuring residents with deep knowledge of local history, attracted large followings. Other virtual topics were cooking, fitness, and genealogy.

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Community Conversations were held to discuss issues surrounding racial justice. Battle Creek Reads, an annual community-wide reading program, moved to virtual visits with Rena Grande, author of “The Distance Between Us,” and Etaf Rum, author of “A Woman is No Man,” for its 16th year.



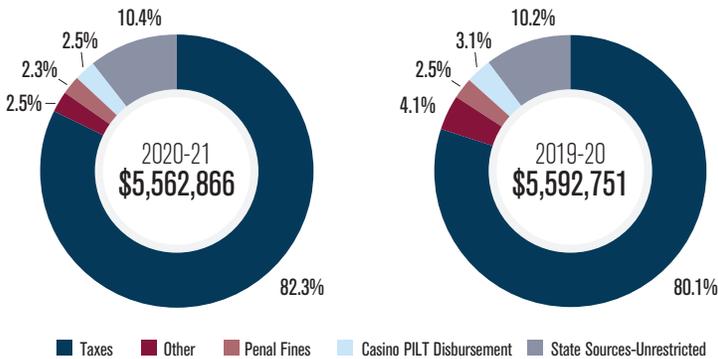
Total youth program attendance was more than 15,475. During the summer of 2020, families were able to receive summer reading materials at food distribution sites and day care centers. The library continued its traditional reading programs with more than 160 children participating.

Financial Report

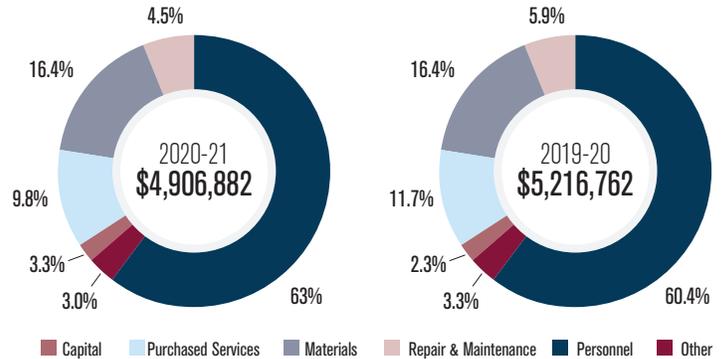
The library’s administration continues to monitor property values and proposed legislation that could affect library funding at both the local and state level. Areas of potential financial concern include local tax-capture agreements and the elimination of the personal property tax. Property values increased slightly. Library expenditures are regularly reviewed for potential cost-saving measures.

Willard Public Library and the Helen Warner Branch continue to be popular destinations while operating at the same rate of 2.0 mills, which was adopted 20 years ago. With careful resource management, the library’s administration anticipates success at this funding level for many years to come.

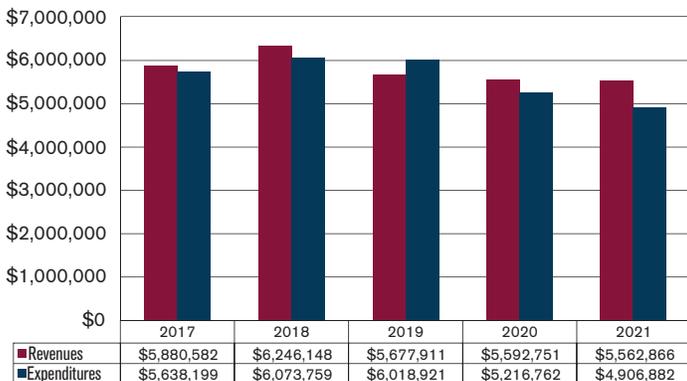
Revenue



Expenditures



General Fund Operations



Average Circulation Per Resident

