



The East Side Freedom Library Legislative Support Request 2023

Legislators,

The East Side Freedom Library seeks support for needed improvements and operations serving the State of Minnesota with unique resources in our historic structure.

For many decades this building was a traditional public library, and the facility is still owned by the City of Saint Paul and leased to the East Side Freedom Library for the past eight years to serve the community in new ways. The East Side Freedom Library has become a beloved institution, resource, and safe space for many in the surrounding community. We are proud to note:

- We have cataloged and maintained **over 35,000** books, recordings, artwork and other materials for use by the community. **Many of these books are one-of-a-kind** examples, and we get inquiries from around the country seeking access to our unique collections.
- We use these materials in work with the public, including such learning examples as **History Day research for young people** in our community. Young learners have access to materials not available anywhere else for their projects, and many have gone on to win competitions at state and even national levels!
- We create new knowledge in community, including a collaborative partnership with **the Hmong Archives**, which records stories and saves information that is unavailable anywhere else in the world.

As part of our lease agreement with the City of Saint Paul, **we have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years** in improvements and repairs for this critical resource. We've replaced the roof and the heating, cooling, and ventilation systems. We've created new shelving from in-kind labor to store more materials for use in our mission. **We've done all of this with generous donations from individuals and philanthropy**, such as the Saint Paul Foundation, the Katherine B. Andersen fund, and more. Those voices know the value of this important asset **but cannot continue to do all the lifting alone.**

Critical needs remain unmet to maintain this asset for our community. Our engineering studies show the need for masonry repair to our historic brick work, among other urgent needs including accessibility improvements for full community access.

We seek your support in meeting these needs for our community. The City of Saint Paul supports our mission and work but is unable to prioritize our modest request in the traditional bonding process. **We seek direct support** appropriating **\$1,433,670** to preserve this building and support the mission work for the East Side, for the region, and indeed for all of Minnesota.

Contact: Saengmany Ratsabout, Executive Director, saengmany@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org or (651) 207-4926. Learn more EastSideFreedomLibrary.org.