



DENVER  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

**Denver Public Library**

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Denver Public Library prepares for \$2.5 million in budget cuts *Library Commission considers options including closing 7-12 branches in 2012*

Denver, CO -- April 20, 2011 – The Denver Public Library Commission approved a whitepaper at the Commission today, Wednesday, April 20, addressing the potential cuts to the Library's budget, as well as options for sustainable funding.

Library Commission President Karen Rokala states, "*The Library Commission's role is to set policy and govern the system, providing overall direction to ensure that the Library provides the best possible service to the community. Current and future funding for the Library is of greatest concern for us, and the purpose of the whitepaper is to address these issues proactively and provide direction for DPL.*"

#### **Key Outcomes of the Whitepaper**

##### 2012 Budget Reductions Could Mean the Closing of 7-12 Branches

The Library has been instructed by the City to prepare a 2012 budget proposal with a reduction of approximately \$2,500,000. This budget reduction target can be met in three different ways: keeping all branches open only 24 hours/week; keeping branches open with smaller service hour reductions and drastically reducing the materials and technology budget; or by closing some branches and using the savings to maintain adequate service at the remaining branches and Central. **The Library Commission recommends pursuing branch closures to maintain minimum service standards, and with a \$2.5MM reduction in the budget, this would mean 7-12 branches would close indefinitely.**

"*Like many City agencies, we are in an unfortunate situation and are going to have to make some tough decisions to meet the current budget reduction target,*" says City Librarian Shirley Amore, "*We are committed however, to serve the growing needs of the public as best we can during this critical time. Closing branches is not something we want to do, but we can't continue to reduce hours to the point of being irrelevant to our community.*"

##### Minimum Service Standards Have Been Set by the Commission

The Library Commission has established minimum Library service standards that include Branches open to the public at least 40 hours per week, the Central Library open at least 56 hours per week and adequate funds for materials, technology and staffing.

Budget reductions for the past several years have resulted in a current level of service that falls below the minimum set forth by Commission for all but four branches, and fails to fully meet the needs of Denver residents.

Maintaining a branch system with limited hours creates inefficiency and waste in the system and does not meet the needs of our customers. Therefore, the Commission does not

recommend further cutting back service hours in the branches in lieu of closing them all together, should the proposed budget cuts come to fruition.

#### There is a Dire Need for Sustainable Funding

As a City agency, the Library is funded almost entirely from the City's General Fund. In absolute numbers, funding in 2010 was less than funding in 2003. Since 2003, the number of full-time equivalent staff declined from 480 to 424. And, the number of service hours per week has dropped from 1,115 to just 856, even with the new Better Denver Bond funded branch opening in Green Valley Ranch last March. The budget for new materials has also decreased significantly. Despite Denver Public Library's best efforts to be creative and efficient with funding, the current level of service is inadequate to meet the needs of Denver residents.

The Commission recognizes that the overall level of funding from City sources is unlikely to increase substantially in the foreseeable future. Sustainable funding is necessary to ensure the future of the Denver Public Library. The commission has analyzed two future funding options: creating a Denver Public Library District with a dedicated property tax mill levy, or maintaining City agency status with a dedicated mill levy. Continuing to receive City funding at present and proposed 2012 levels would require the Commission to initiate seven to twelve branch closures in order to maintain minimum service levels at remaining locations.

The Library Commission will be working closely with the new City administration and City Council to forge a long-term funding solution that best meets the needs of the people of Denver.

#### Timeline & Next Steps

June 2011: DPL to submit their budget recommendation based on a \$2.5MM reduction to the Commission.

Summer 2011: Denver residents will have the opportunity to discuss the budget situation, pending closures, and options for sustainable funding in community forums (dates TBD).

September 2011: The Mayor presents his budget to the City Council

November 2011: Final budget approval

The complete white paper can be found on the DPL's website:

[denverlibrary.org/content/library-commission](http://denverlibrary.org/content/library-commission)

#### About the Denver Public Library

The Denver Public Library is a vital community resource—free and open to all. With 24 locations, the Library connects Denver residents to information, ideas and experiences that enrich their lives and strengthens our community. The Library plays an important role in advancing reading and literacy from birth through adulthood and is a key link in developing a knowledgeable, productive workforce and fostering economic development.

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