



**Denver Public Library**  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Poll Results Indicate Denver Voters Support a Library District**

*Denver, CO – May 24, 2011* – At the May 18 Denver Public Library Commission meeting, Commissioners and the public were presented with findings of a recent poll conducted by Ciruli Associates, between March 28-April 2, 2011. The Library is currently planning for a potential \$2.5 million budget cut target in 2012 and is exploring long-term sustainable funding solutions which may require a voter-approved ballot initiative.

The poll surveyed 500 frequent Denver voters about the state of the economy, and the impact the current City budget shortfall has on Denver Public Library. The poll also asked specific questions about potential long-term funding solutions for the Library.

The results indicate that Denver voters have considerable concerns about the bad economy and additional City budget cuts, with some optimism about the future. Most voters were library users, believe budget cuts have already had a negative impact, and oppose additional cuts to branches and material acquisition. The majority of respondents were DPL cardholders, and support the mission of the Library. If faced with a 2012 budget reduction, they favored further reducing hours versus closing branches, and strongly supported a library district, funded by property tax as a long-term solution.

Here are the findings in detail:

- Over half (58%) of the voters polled supported a library district, without knowing the fiscal impact that would have on individuals.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the voters polled supported funding the library district with a mill levy, or property tax, when they learned the cost would be approximately \$56 per year on a \$200,000 home.
- The poll indicates that Denver voters favor the idea funding a library district (64%) vs. dedicated City mill levy (55%). Both solutions would cost the property owners the same, however with the City mill levy, the Library would maintain City agency status.
- The aspects of the library district that appealed most were: restoring children's reading programs (83%); restoring the amount of internet access (77%); restoring the budget for books and materials (76%); and finally restoring library hours and days of operating (74%).



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- When given a choice between closing branches or further reducing hours/days open, 66% of the respondents said they would prefer the Library to reduce hours/number of days open.
  - In general, Denver voters indicated that they are concerned about jobs, City budget, and low performing schools. Fifty five percent feel that things in Denver are going in the right direction, while 29% feel things have gotten off on the wrong track.
  - When asked about the performance of the Denver Public Library, 76% gave an excellent/good rating. This was the highest rating amongst other Government agencies. Ninety-five percent also believe in the Library's mission to provide free/equal access to all.
  - Two-thirds (66%) of the voters polled have a Denver Library Card, and 78% have visited in the last 12 months. They did indicate however that due to the reduction in hours and days of service, 30% are using the Library less often.

### What is a Library District?

A library district is a separate, independent agency with dedicated property tax revenue that is approved by voters. They are governed by library boards appointed by City Council. The Denver Public Library Commission believes separating the Denver Public Library from the City and receiving independent funding through a library district is a viable option for ensuring the long-term success of the Library, and the community.

### How is a Library District Funded?

The library district would be funded with a property tax on residential and commercial property. The Library would need to receive about \$38 million a year to fund the Central Library and 23 branches at acceptable service standards set forth by the Commission in the White Paper dated April 20, 2011 (available on [denverlibrary.org/budget](http://denverlibrary.org/budget)). The owner of a \$200,000 home would have to pay approximately an additional \$53.01 to \$58.24 per year to fund the District.

### Why would Denver want to form a Library District?

To date, over fifty libraries in Colorado have established funding through a Library District, and have shown the advantages of this arrangement. Library Districts tend to be better funded and thus are better able to provide exceptional library services to the community. They also are more likely to ensure long-term success and sustainability than libraries operating under government entities.

Here's how:

- **It allows a library to focus solely on providing library services.** An independent library district is a single purpose district. There is no competition with other services for



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library funding. The library can focus on fulfilling its mission – as mandated by the State of Colorado – to provide equal access to information to all. Libraries are built on the foundational values of democracy, and they need to be able to focus on providing exceptional library services without the distractions of political pressures or other competing agendas.

- **It creates a direct relationship between the library and the taxpayers.** In an independent library district, the level of library funding is set by a vote of the people. This makes the library directly accountable to the people it serves and encourages efficiency and transparency.
- **It allows libraries to plan effectively.** A library district is funded through voter-approved property taxes. Property taxes are more stable and more predictable than sales taxes. Because revenue in a particular year is based on assessed property values from two to three years earlier, there is time to prepare for any impending decline. This allows library districts to count on a stable level of funding, engage in long-term planning and build financial reserves in anticipation of future needs.
- **It allows libraries to provide better service.** Research shows that per capita support for libraries with voter-supported funding tends to be higher than per capita support for libraries that depend on direct appropriations from other entities. In addition, library districts can often obtain key support services at a lower cost than large government entities. As a result, library districts tend to be better funded and better able to support enhanced library services and higher usage levels than other libraries.

The public can learn more about the Denver Public Library's budget situation visit: [denverlibrary.org/budget](http://denverlibrary.org/budget) or by attending one of several community budget meetings being held at various library branches May 23 – June 6, details can be found on the Library's website.

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*Founded in 1889, the **Denver Public Library** (DPL) 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.*

[www.denverlibrary.org](http://www.denverlibrary.org)