

# A Community Conversation

## Library Funding



# Overview

- Five Listening Sessions in July
  - Hollywood Library
  - North Portland Library
  - Gresham Library
  - Central Library
  - Hillsdale Library
- Public Hearing July 31st
- Direct contacts/email
- Online Survey

# Listening Sessions

- Five sessions
- Attendance averaged 30-35 participants each
- Themes:
  - People are hurting because of reduction in hours
  - New hours aren't satisfactory
  - Library helps define a person's sense of place
  - Library provides benefit to the whole community
  - Library's funding model and tax compression are hard to grasp
  - People support library district model in general
  - People expressed confidence in intent of voters - offered levy's 85% approval was clear message.

# Emails about the library district

<b>District 1 -</b>	91 in favor /3 opposed
<b>District 2 -</b>	125 in favor/1 opposed
<b>District 3 -</b>	66 in favor /1 opposed
<b>District 4 -</b>	75 in favor/1 opposed
<b>Chair's Office -</b>	135 in favor/3 opposed

# Online Survey Results

- More than 20,000 people took the survey
- 76% rated library services as "very important"
- 96.6% rated library services as "very important" or "somewhat important"
- 62% prefer a library district to restore services over the current levy or an increased levy that would restore services

# Survey continued...

- Current materials, books, electronic books, etc., highest personal importance to respondents.
- Of respondents who prefer a district, 56% prefer a vote in 2012

# Open Ended Questions

## **Q4. How well used is your local library?**

Themes:

- Libraries are very well used and busy
  - demand for services is high, encourages use of holds
  - parking, space is scarce, busy = not relaxing
- Libraries are gathering places for all
  - Access to resources
  - Safe place for kids and families
  - Convenient, "loved" and "necessary"

## Q4. Quotes

"There are always lots of people there. I LOVE our library. My children LOVE the library."

"A place for ALL Portlanders"

"Very well used. Sometimes it's difficult to find a place to park."

"I live in Chinatown, so the central library is my home branch. Of course, it is filled with people every time I go!"

"I am always thrilled when I have to stand in line to use the check-out stand or ask a question."



# Q6. What is the biggest threat to our local libraries?

"Closure" - attributed to many things:

- Public not understanding the value
- Budget cuts/poor fund management
- Lack of knowledge of services
- Shortage of books
- Lack of access due to limited hours
- Online technology making libraries obsolete

## Q6. Quotes

"People who don't realize what an incredible, amazing asset our libraries are will always be the libraries' biggest threat."

"People with means assuming that they can personally obtain anything they want online or from bookstores and forgetting about the well-being of the whole community, especially underprivileged - young, old infirm, poor, etc."

"That they will close due to electronic books, etc."

## **Q7. & Q8. - Importance of the Library**

**"All in all, how important are local library services compared with other local public services?"**

<b>Very important -</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Somewhat important -</b>	<b>20.6%</b>
<b>Not too important -</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>Not at all important -</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
<b>Don't know -</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

# Q8. Why are they that level of importance to you?

## Themes:

- Access -
  - For all individuals - an equalizer
  - To free materials
  - To entertainment and recreation - for families and people on fixed incomes
- Facilitate positive human interactions
- Education and literacy are important for kids and adults
- People attribute their success and quality of person to access to the library
- Libraries are important but must live within the budget

## Q8. Quotes

"The library is one of the only purely good things most people can agree on"

"I lost my job due to a car accident and resulting disability. Multcolib has many options for what kinds of materials I can check out."

"I have a good education and a good job. I wouldn't have either of these without having had regular access to public libraries from a very early age."

## Q8. Quotes continued

"So much of today's society and culture isolates us. Libraries do the opposite. They get us out of our cubicle worlds and connect us with resources."

"We are on a tight budget, do not have the Internet at home or the ability to rent videos or buy books. In order to succeed in society, you must have Internet access on occasion. Having libraries open 7 days a week is vital. I work, my husband works, we have a child, and we are on a fixed income. The library offers us services (like checking out books) that we would otherwise not have (as we cannot afford to buy them)."

# Overall themes from all outreach

- Generally, feedback was extremely positive about the library
- Majority of respondents preferred a library district
  - some split on timing 2012 vs. 2014 though survey respondents favored 2012
- Public participation was high compared to other issues