

**Multnomah County Library  
Bond proposal executive summary**

June 2020

**Executive summary**

At the direction of the Multnomah County Library District Board, Multnomah County Library presents models for costs, timelines and staging of library space planning projects. The Board may wish to consider referring a general obligation bond measure to voters in November 2020 to begin implementation of the library's [Framework for Future Library Spaces](#), adopted by the Library District Board/Board of County Commissioners in June 2017.

**Proposal modifications to respond to community recovery and opportunity**

As a result of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the community, the library has carefully considered its obligations as a steward of public resources and its commitments to helping people and communities recover and serving those most affected by new and existing economic and social barriers. The library is proposing three modifications from the measure that the Board voted to refer on March 5, 2020.

The proposed changes are as follows:

- *Remove* Capitol Hill Library as a proposed project.
- *Add* a project at North Portland Library that renovates the existing 8,700 sf library and adds a 1,500 sf addition.
- *Add* a project at Northwest library that builds a roughly 10,000 sf new library at a new leased or owned building/site, more than doubling the size of the existing library.

These proposed projects would reduce the overall proposal cost; increase important library services and opportunity to a community experiencing ongoing hardships; and secure and expand library benefit to an area that previously did not have guaranteed long-term library space.

**The need**

With only .33 square foot per capita, most Multnomah County libraries are cramped and crowded, with inadequate seating and no dedicated space for quiet reading or study. In Multnomah County, libraries regularly turn away patrons from children's reading programs and some libraries deny up to 70% of requests for public meeting room use due to lack of room availability. Only one library has a dedicated creative learning space offering 21st

century tools. The lack of space is especially acute in East County, where 40% of the population has just 20%<sup>1</sup> of library space.

Multnomah County libraries are the 4th busiest in the nation, but rank 102nd in square footage. Many peer libraries nationwide and in Oregon offer their communities a full square foot of space per capita, with plenty of room for study, collaboration, community conversation, creative learning, technology use and celebration of diverse community cultures—all the hallmarks of a 21st century library.

### **Community input**

Beginning in 2016, the library conducted a comprehensive community engagement and analysis process to understand space deficiencies and the community's priorities for the modernization and expansion of library spaces. An important milestone in that process was the creation of a specific library capital planning vision tied to projected population in 2035, the Framework for Future Library Spaces.

The framework was created based on the input of diverse communities, through 13 culturally-specific focus groups, 51 community conversations across the county with nearly 2,000 community members at libraries, community centers, service agencies and partner organizations and a public survey with more than 1,700 responses.

In addition, the library convened a Blue Ribbon Committee, made up of 25 civic and business leaders from across the county, to independently review analysis and proposals. The committee met three times between April and September 2019. A primary focus of this group's work was to scrutinize cost estimates. At each step along the way, members were asked to provide verbal and written feedback.

### **Phasing projects**

In spite of the library's ongoing preventative building maintenance program, library buildings are aging and are in greater need of updating and renovation. Given the complexity and breadth of these needs, a single comprehensive funding measure to address all needs isn't realistic. Instead, the library's proposals focus on a limited number of projects with an appropriate scope and distribution to be funded by an initial bond measure. Later, more libraries will receive equal attention.

Below, "neighborhood" denotes a renovation within the same or similar size of the existing library, or roughly 10,000 square feet; "destination" denotes a 20,000-30,000 square foot library; and "flagship" denotes a size similar to Central Library at about 100,000 square feet.

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<sup>1</sup> Updated 6/22/20



If approved by voters, projects to be accomplished with a November 2020 bond include:

- Build a new East County Flagship library
- Rebuild and expand four Destination libraries
- Renovate and expand three Neighborhood libraries
- Increase efficiency and reduce handling costs by converting to an automated materials handling system, like that of most modern public libraries. This involves establishing a systemwide books and materials sorting and distribution center and installing automated materials handling equipment across the system
- Connect all libraries to gigabit speed internet service
- Increase accessibility of buildings, services and technology for people with disabilities
- Improve seismic readiness: all newly constructed buildings will be built to “immediate occupancy” seismic standards to serve as community anchors after a major seismic event. Renovated buildings continue to meet current “survivability” standards.

### **Bond oversight and accountability**

Cost estimates were prepared by a professional cost estimator in consultation with architects retained to assist with the planning process. Initial estimates were reviewed by a second independent cost estimator and Blue Ribbon Committee members familiar with the construction industry. Cost estimates and estimating methods have also been vetted for accuracy against the County’s construction costs on the Gladys McCoy Health Department Headquarters and Central Courthouse projects.

If the bond is approved by voters, a community bond oversight committee will provide accountability, oversight and reporting. The county’s independent financial auditor, along with a professional construction auditor, will monitor expenditures.

### **Projected Bond Cost Estimates<sup>2</sup>**

Estimated Bond Amount: \$387,000,000 (includes cost of debt issuance)

Estimated Cost of Debt: \$52-53 million (assuming 3% true interest rate)

Estimated rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Value: \$0.68 (highest year) and \$0.61 (average over 8.29 year bond term)

Estimated annual cost for home of median assessed property value: \$134.45 (monthly \$11.20)

Median Home Assessed Value: \$199,480

Bond Term: 8.29 years

Total Estimated Construction and Land Costs: \$235,054,524

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<sup>2</sup>Updated 6/18/20



Total Estimated Soft Costs: \$150,364,985

Escalation: 4.5% annually

Net Contingency as a percent of total cost: 15.03%