

# Library district would create single source of funding for Multnomah County

By Jillian Daley  
The Southwest Portland Post

Half a million people in the Portland metro area carry a Multnomah County Library card, said library supporter Tom Mattox during a presentation before Hillsdale Neighborhood Association on September 5.

"Now more than ever, we really need the services of the library," Mattox said. "We love the library. It's one of the safe, educational places we can use for free. It's a central part of our democracy."

A county measure on the November ballot would form a library district with a permanent rate. A library district is an independent entity with dedicated property tax revenue.

To support the library district, homeowners would pay up to \$1.24 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. It will be \$1.18 for the first five years, increasing in \$.01 increments during the next five years. The district takes effect in 2013.

If approved, Multnomah County's new district would be the 25th library district in Oregon, according to the Multnomah County Library website.

"One of the prides of the Hillsdale Neighborhood is we have one of the biggest, baddest libraries, LEED-certified" said resident Arnie Panitch after Mattox's presentation. "So if we don't vote for (the district) then

there's something cockeyed." LEED is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The library district revenue would restore and retain library services such as summer reading, books, student support, job seeking support and outreach to senior citizens. It also would prevent reductions in services, programs, activities and hours at the library's 19 locations, according to the measure filed with the county.

"The number of libraries has been expanding, which also adds to operating costs," said Ruth Adkins, a Board of Education member attending the neighborhood association meeting. "There was some concern that they built more than they could support."

Mattox said Adkins' comment reminded him of something. "One thing I read, if you took all the square space of the libraries – downtown and all of the branches – they would all fit inside the Seattle Public Library," he said.

Currently, 24 percent of Multnomah County Library funding comes from the county general fund and 66 percent comes from a library levy. The remaining 10 percent comes from sources such as fees, fines and grants, according to the library website.

The library's local option levy was renewed in May. Through the levy, homeowners pay \$0.89 per 1,000 dollars assessed value.

Hillsdale Neighborhood Associa-



Multnomah County Library supporter Tom Mattox delivered a presentation on the proposed library district during the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association meeting in September. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

tion chairman Mikal Apenes said he was curious as to how the library district would affect the current funding structure. "What happens to the funding that comes from the county?"

Mattox replied if the library district were approved, the library no longer would receive supplemental funding from the county. "That will actually free up a little money in the county to spend on other things," Mattox said.

If voters approve the library district, it would supersede years Two and Three of the freshly renewed three-year levy, according to the li-

brary's website. The district would become the single source of funding for the library.

Mattox said voters should support the library because so many people depend on it. "We are the second busiest library system in the country," he said. "Does anybody know who the first is?"

"New York," called out a couple of people at the meeting. "That's right," Mattox said.

For more information, go to [www.multcolib.org/about/funding/funding-faq.html](http://www.multcolib.org/about/funding/funding-faq.html).

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