



FINANCING CENTRAL BRANCH LIBRARIES: FIVE OUT OF SEVEN COMPETITOR REGIONS RAISED TAXES

Over the past two decades several major American cities have either constructed new central libraries or made significant renovations to existing facilities. Many of these have become iconic landmarks for their cities and centers for civic life.

Notable to the current discussion facing the City of San Diego, of SEVEN main branch libraries constructed or renovated since 1991 in the regions the San Diego Association of Governments uses to benchmark San Diegoⁱ, FIVE were paid for through new, voter approved revenues.ⁱⁱ NUSIPR identified only TWO projects, the new Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. library in San Jose and Phoenix's Burton Barr Central Library, built without raising taxes.

These findings suggest that policymakers supportive of constructing a new central library may wish to step back. Reexamining the wisdom of trying to build a new central library with just existing revenue streams would seem especially important given:

- The City's structural deficit,
- Concerns about the cost of construction, debate over how the central library may increase pressure on existing operating budgets,
- The fact that the state grant constitutes less than 20% of the project's overall budget

PORTLANDⁱⁱⁱ
CENTRAL BRANCH RENOVATED 1994-1997
FINANCED: 1993 Library bond paid for by increasing property taxes.



SAN FRANCISCO^{iv}
NEW MAIN LIBRARY OPENED 1996
COST \$140 MILLION
FINANCED: 1988 \$109 million bond paid through increased property taxes (76% voter approval).

SAN JOSE^v
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MAIN
OPENED 2003
(Joint Use with San Jose State University)
COST: \$175 million
FINANCED: Redevelopment tax increment used for City's share. No new revenues needed.



SEATTLE^{vi}
NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY OPENED 2004
COST: \$165 million
FINANCED: \$196 million bond paid for by increasing property taxes (Passed in 1998 with 70% voter approval).

DENVER^{vii}
MAIN LIBRARY ADDITION OPENED 1995
COST: \$95 million
FINANCED: 1990 \$91.6 million bond paid for by increasing property taxes (75% voter approval).



MINNEAPOLIS^{viii}
NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY OPENED 2006
COST: \$138.8 million
FINANCED: Maximum \$140 million bond paid for by increased property tax (67% voter approval)

PHOENIX
BURTON BARR CENTRAL LIBRARY OPENED 1995
COST \$43 million
FINANCED: 1988 Bond Measure. No New Taxes.



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- ⁱ . Indicators of Sustainable Competitiveness: San Diego Region; San Diego Association of Governments, 2002.
- ⁱⁱ . All of seven of the projects successfully attracted tens of millions in private philanthropy.
- ⁱⁱⁱ . www2.co.multnomah.or.us/County_Management/FREDS/Records/archival/Library%20Administrative%20History.pdf (accessed 6/18/2009)
- ^{iv} . http://sfpl4.sfpl.org/pdffiles/November8_1988short.pdf (accessed 6/18/2009)
- ^v . As per conversation with City of San Jose Library Staff. 6/19/2-009
- ^{vi} . <http://www.spl.org/lfa/siteindex.html> (accessed 6/18/2009)
- ^{vii} Denver Public Library History (<http://denverlibrary.org/about/history.html> accessed 6/23/2009)
- ^{viii} . “Fact Sheet Minneapolis Central Library” (<http://www.hclib.org/pub/info/meetingrooms/minneapoliscentralfactsheet.pdf>) and Minneapolis Passes Library Referendum (<http://www.mail-archive.com/mpls-issues@freedom2.mtn.org/msg01005.html>). Both accessed 6/23/2009.