

Library/Cultural Arts Center on the Ballot April 11th 2017

Last Monday the Columbus City Council approved moving the Columbus Library/Cultural Arts Center project forward for a third vote on April 11th, 2017. It is very important that people know the April 11th ballot question is not asking for new or additional tax funding for the Library/Cultural Arts Center. Last spring Columbus voters approved the renewal of the half-cent sales tax to fund both the Library/Cultural Arts Center project and public safety facilities. The half-cent sales tax was approved on May 10th, 2016 and is already being collected.

The financing for the Library/Cultural Arts Center project is unique for a public project. The Library/Cultural Arts Center project will be voted on three times. The first allowed the library to begin planning and design for the facility. The second renewed the funding mechanism for the project by maintaining the current level of sales tax in Columbus. That second vote also named the Library/Cultural Arts Center and public safety projects as the recipients of the half-cent sales tax. The third vote, scheduled for April 11th, 2017, will allow the funds from the already approved half-cent sales tax to be used for the Library/Cultural Arts Center project. The question will ask voters to approve up to \$8.5 million dollars of bonds. The half-cent sales tax will be used to repay those bonds. The half-cent sales tax generates roughly \$2 million every 12 months.

The Library/Cultural Arts Center design has been built on community input. Through the town hall meetings, focus groups, open houses, committees, and City Council meetings Columbus has arrived at a project that will meet its long term needs. If voters approve the \$8.5 million of public funds on April 11th, they will be combined with donations, grant funds, and gifts to create a \$16 million dollar facility in downtown Columbus. The community's priorities were identified as a multi-function, multi-purpose building with space for events in a medium sized auditorium style space, a visual arts gallery, and a 21st century library. The library space will provide the community with room to grow collections and services for 25 years.

The City of Columbus has a lot of priorities and a lot of needs. It is important that the Library/Cultural Arts Center fit financially with the needs of the whole community. The borrowing of \$8.5 million for the Library/Cultural Arts Center and its repayment by the half-cent sales tax do not endanger public safety improvements for Columbus. The half-cent sales tax makes it possible to fund police and fire improvements and the library. If you have questions about the April 11th ballot question or the Library/Cultural Arts Center project please contact Library Director Drew Brookhart.
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