

Bellingham Public Library Facilities Master Plan



**Prepared by Godfrey's Associates, Inc.
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Executive Summary

Godfrey's Associates, Inc. is a library consulting firm with an international practice and extensive experience with public library systems. Godfrey's was engaged by the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees to assist in the development of a Facilities Master Plan. The plan development methodology included:

- Multiple community engagement forums
- Peer library, demographics, and industry trends analysis
- Assessment of existing facilities
- Assessment of BPL's approved Level of Service (LOS) objectives, with emphasis on the facilities standard (square feet per capita)

Community and Stakeholder Involvement

Community input to the Master Plan included 18 stakeholder interviews, 13 focus groups, and 980 online survey responses. The results of this outreach showed a strong support for the Library in the community. The predominate desire for improvements was for more access and materials, including additional facilities.

Assessment of Current Facilities

Godfrey's visited and assessed all of BPL's facilities. Using a functional assessment tool specific to libraries, BPL facilities were rated by the consultants on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Average, 4=Good, and 5=Excellent. BPL facilities ranked Fair (Fairhaven and Barkley) to Average (Central). These ratings largely reflect the age and size of the facilities. The current facilities lack modern, energy efficient infrastructure and flexible spaces.

Service Area Mapping. Service areas for the three existing BPL facilities were mapped utilizing Bellingham Public Library customer data and a standard drive time methodology. Based on Bellingham's street network, this drive time varies from 6 to 10 minutes depending on the Library location.

On the map in Figure 1 on the following page, the service areas for the Central Library, Fairhaven Branch Library, and Barkley Branch Library are defined, including overlapping areas. The yellow and tan areas delineate portions of the current city limits + urban growth areas (UGA) that are underserved by existing Library locations.

Level of Service Standards

Over a period of three years from 2016-2018, BPL's Level of Service (LOS) standards were established based on national norms. These standards include facilities (sf/capita), open hours, materials (expenditures/capita), and staffing FTE. The consultants reviewed and affirmed the facilities standard as part of their peer library review.

The LOS standard for facilities is measured in square feet per capita, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1

<i>Facilities LOS Standard</i>	<i>1-Low/Minimal</i>	<i>2- Medium/Operational</i>	<i>3-High/Optimal</i>
<i>Square feet/capita</i>	<i>0.60</i>	<i>0.80</i>	<i>1.00</i>

Level of Service standards were discussed by Council on November 13, 2017. By unanimous vote (6-0, 1 excused) the Council directed "...the Administration to give recommendations to the Library Board of Trustees to move forward with Goal [Level] 2 or 3 as a priority."

Over the last five years, investments have been prioritized in the materials expenditure/capita standard and the Library staffing FTE standard.

BPL's facilities are currently below Level 1 – Low/Minimal Level of Service at 0.53 square feet/capita, which includes the City limits + urban growth areas (UGA). To better align with long range planning efforts throughout the City, this Facilities Master Plan uses city limits + urban growth areas (UGA) when projecting population growth.

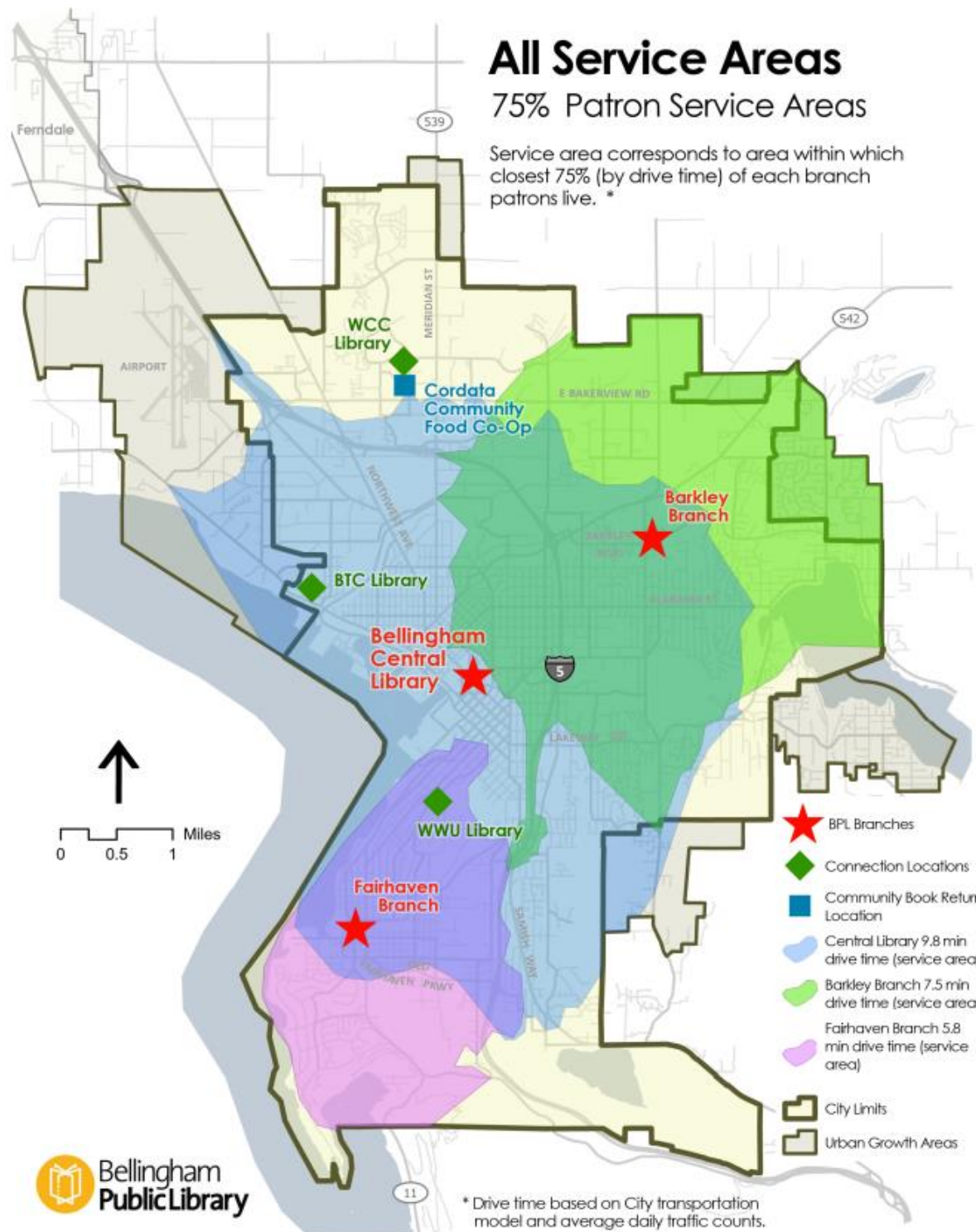


Figure 1: All service areas, Bellingham Public Library

Future Facility Needs Assessment

Population Growth. Future facility needs were based on a population forecast for Bellingham and the UGA, as presented in Table 2. The forecasts were extended 20 years, to 2042.

Table 2

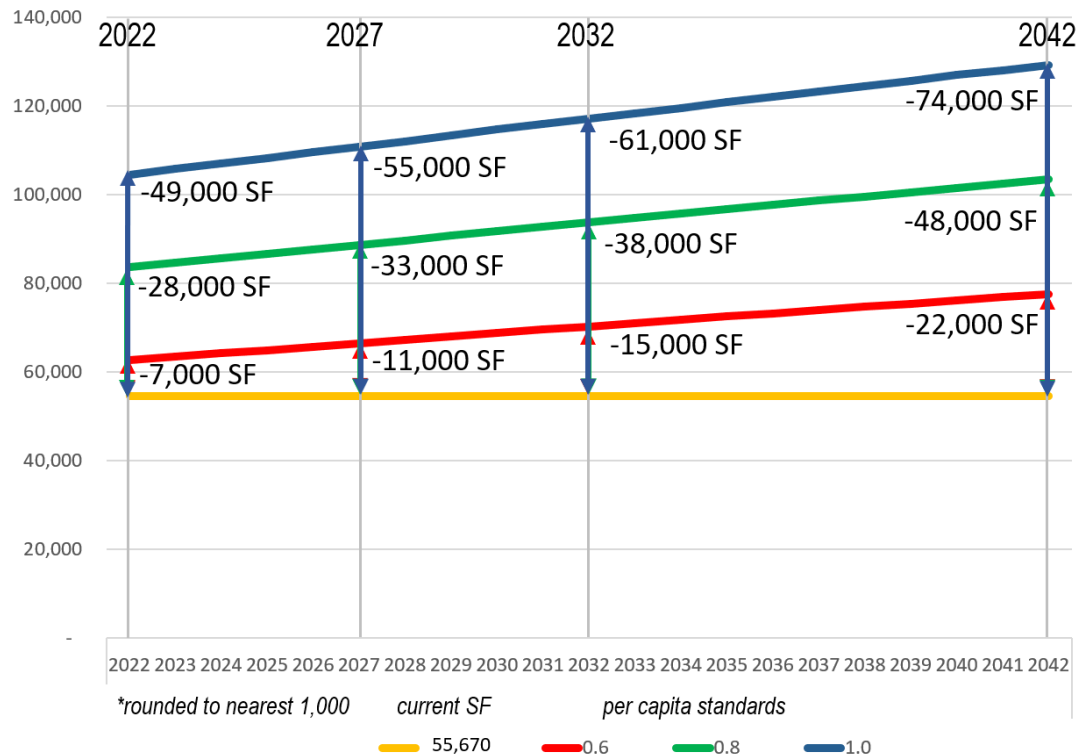
Population forecast	2022	2027	2032	2042
City limits + UGA	104,600	110,800	117,200	129,400

Future Facilities. The population forecast determines the additional square footage needed to achieve a higher level of service over the next 20 years. At present, the Bellingham Public Library has 55,670 square feet over three locations:

- Central Library: 44,000 square feet
- Fairhaven Branch Library: 10,250 square feet
- Barkley Branch Library: 1,420 square feet

Figure 2 charts the projected square footage shortfall over 3 planning horizons: 5-years (2027), 10-years (2032), and 20-years (2042). Population estimates are based on city limits + urban growth areas (UGSA).

Figure 2: Projected Square Footage Shortfall per LOS Standards*, 2022-2042



Facilities Plan Recommendations

The Consultants have presented facility recommendations extending to 2042 in three tiers: near-term (5 years), mid-term (10 years), and long-term (20 years). The objective is to reach the higher LOS standards of Level 2 (0.8 square feet/capita) or Level 3 (1.0 square feet/capita) in the 20-year planning horizon, as directed by City Council in 2017. Also included are suggestions for improving the space utilization of existing facilities.

Near-Term Priorities (5 years)

- **Central Library** – Renovate the remaining 2 floors of the Central Library, improve space utilization and functionality, upgrade HVAC system.

- *Fairhaven Branch Library* – Plan for rehabilitation to improve space utilization and functionality. The historic nature of the building may facilitate grant funding.
- *North side* – Establish a library presence on the growing north side of Bellingham.

Mid-Term Priorities (10 years)

- *Fairhaven Branch Library* – Complete rehabilitation to improve space utilization and functionality.
- *Barkley Branch Library* – Increase library presence on east side of Bellingham / Barkley branch.

Long-Term Priorities (20 years)

- *Central library* – Evaluate square footage needs at Central Library as needed to achieve the desired Level of Service.
- *Branch Libraries* – Evaluate square footage needs at branches as needed to achieve the desired Level of Service.

Desired Outcomes

The Facilities Master Plan provides a roadmap for attaining a higher level of service as well as improving the usability of existing spaces. Additional desired outcomes include greater equity of access to City services, and library facilities that are operationally sustainable, cost effective, and climate resilient.

Section 1: Introduction

On October 21, 2021, the City of Bellingham issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) number 56B-2021 for the research and development of a City Library Facilities Master Plan. In the RFP, the Program Requirements outlined the following charge to potential consultants:

“The City of Bellingham Public Library (Library) seeks competitive proposals for a consultant to develop a 10-year Library Facilities Master Plan to quantify existing space deficiencies and assets in the context of current program needs, to identify how best to address deficiencies and to plan for future space and program growth system-wide. It (the Plan) will serve as a defensible guide to the Library’s capital program as it seeks to provide high quality 21st Century library services that meet the growing and evolving needs of the City.

“The Facilities Master Plan will enable the Library to respond appropriately and effectively to changes in community demographics, technology and telecommunications development, emerging service expectations, aging facilities, and other future needs. Once complete, the Facilities Master Plan will be a significant asset to the Library’s ongoing planning efforts.”

The proposal from Godfrey’s Associates, Inc. was selected for the project.

Project Methodology

In response to the RFP, the Consultants crafted and completed a Work Plan consisting of a chronological group of tasks necessary to complete the 10-year Facilities Plan, as follows:

Ongoing Project Management. The Consultants executed project orientation, organization, and communication parameters spanning the project duration, as required to complete the Facilities Plan report. Tasks in this group included regularly scheduled status meetings; monthly progress reports with interim deliverables; and monthly invoices substantiated by each progress report.

Data Collection & Analysis. The Consultants collected and evaluated historic usage data for the Bellingham Public Library and demographics of the City of Bellingham as they impact the Facilities Master Planning process. This group included future population projections.

Trends Analysis. The Consultants evaluated national trends and best practices as they relate to BPL and COB planning needs. This work included a survey of current and emerging trends in libraries and benchmarking BPL against peer library systems.

Library Facility Assessment. The Consultants completed an assessment of all Library facilities, including dedicated BPL space at three college locations. They reviewed space utilization, configuration, and suitability for Library services, making recommendations for optimal library location and adjacencies of functional public and non-public areas. This work included projections of current and future space needs contrasted against existing facility capacities and drive-time service area mapping to gauge current location convenience.

Stakeholder/Community Involvement. The Consultants implemented a community involvement process, engaging a broad range of stakeholders in assessing current facilities and future community needs. This task group included several methods for gathering input, including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and an online survey.

Future Footprint Assessment. The Consultants made recommendations as to the appropriate size and location of the Central Library and branches within current service areas, accounting for forecasted population growth in Bellingham urban growth areas. This work identified additional facilities needed, recommended size and type, and in what areas they should be located. Also included was identification of potential locations for additional stand-alone community Drop Boxes

Facility Recommendations. The Consultants recommended prioritizing actionable steps over the 10-year Facilities Plan. This work included identification of capital cost to implement, identification of available funds, and prioritization of improvements by optimizing value for cost.

Draft Master Plan. The Consultants prepared a written Facilities Master Plan and presentation for Library Committee direction, including an online review with the Committee to identify refinements based on their feedback and electronic copies of data, presentations, and reports developed as part of the project.

Final Plan. The Consultants made presentations to the Library Board of Trustees and City Council in advance of submitting the final Facilities Master Plan.

Section 2: Community and Stakeholder Involvement

The Consultants engaged a broad range of stakeholders in assessing current facilities and future community needs:

- 18 stakeholder interviews
- 13 focus groups
- 980 online survey responses

Feedback from every source indicates BPL is a highly regarded fixture in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

Summary of Comments from Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Issues Impacting Bellingham. The most common responses to the question *What are the 3 most pressing issues affecting Bellingham* were:

- Affordable housing
- Homelessness
- Climate change

General Comments. From community members, City officials, and staff:

- Downtown parking, as well as parking at all BPL Libraries is an issue.
- A library on the north side is needed.
- City and County Libraries cooperate well with each other.
- Listening to the public is very important.

- The timing for investment in libraries seems good.
- Library staff and members of the public are concerned about security at the downtown library.
- Fairhaven is an iconic Carnegie building in an older area of town.
- Storytelling at the Mall is well-received, and well attended.
- The Barkley branch needs to be bigger but will likely have to move.
- The Friends of Library group is beneficial and raised significant funds for the Library pre-pandemic.

Bellingham Community Survey

Over a one-month period from May 1 to May 31, 2022, the “Engage Bellingham” survey was in place. Approximately 980 community members responded.

91.6 percent of the participants reported they have a BPL Library Card.

The Central Library is the library of first choice for 55.1% of respondents, followed by Fairhaven (22.5%) and Barkley (15.1%). 7.3% indicated they use one of the three college libraries for return/pick-up of materials.

With regard to frequency of use over a 12-month period, 30.7 percent stated weekly, 25 percent indicated monthly, 13.9 percent three to five times a year. Eighty three (8.5%) indicated two or three times a week.

As for services used, 761 participants searched the online catalog and 778 checked out books and other circulating materials while 506 borrowed eBooks and utilized streaming services. Over three hundred (345) consulted a Librarian.

Service Priorities. Survey participants were afforded the opportunity to indicate the importance, or not, from a list of 15 services. There were five importance indicators to choose from:

- Very Important.
- Somewhat Important.
- Slightly important.
- Not at all important.
- Do not know.

The five “Very important” were, in a first to fifth order:

- Print books for borrowing.
- eBooks and digital audiobooks for borrowing.
- Free Wi-Fi at library facilities and Wi-Fi hotspots.
- Storytimes, summer reading, and other learning activities.
- Outreach services for residents who are unable to come to the Library.

Desired Improvements. There were 15 possible responses. “Open more hours,” with 475 responses, ranked Number one. Number two was “More eBooks, digital audiobooks, or other digital content” (397 favored). Number 3 was, “More print books” (377), followed by “More story times, programs, and other activities for children” (220).

Importance, Satisfaction & Benefits. Nearly nine of every ten participants (89.4%) responded that the provided services of the BPL were “Very important.” Another 8.9 percent checked “Somewhat important.” Three participants responded “Not at all important.”

When asked about satisfaction, 69.4 percent indicated “Very satisfied” and “Somewhat satisfied” marked by 25.4 percent (247 persons). Fourteen participants (0.4%) were “Not at all satisfied.”

As for the benefits of the Public Library in comparison to other tax-supported services, e.g. schools, parks, and roads, the Library was placed “At the top of the list” by 596 respondents, or 61.5 percent. “In the middle” was checked by 33.6% (326 persons), while only 0.8% (17) checked “At the bottom.”

Survey respondents were also asked to compare BPL services with those in the place they lived prior to relocating to Bellingham. Just over a quarter (26.0%) indicated “About the same.” “Much Better in Bellingham” was the opinion of

10.5% and “Better in Bellingham” was marked by 14.9%. “Better” or “Much Better” in former place of residence were chosen by 14.4% (Better) and 9.4% (Much Better). Twenty Six percent responded: “About the same” and 8.0% indicated “Did not use the public library in my former place of residence.”

Demographic Information. The survey asked *Years lived in Bellingham:*

“More than 8 years “ - 67.1%
“3 – 8 years “ - 16.6%
“1 – 3 years” - 5.1%
“6 months to 1 year” – 2.7%
“Less than 6 months” – 0.5%
11.2 % stated “I do not live in the City of Bellingham.”

When asked *You are between the ages of ...:*

“65 or older” – 37.8%
“35 to 49” - 25.2%
“50 to 64” - 23.5%
“25 to 34” - 9.2%
“18 to 24” - 2.5%
“14 to 17” - 1.7%
“Prefer not to answer” – 1.7%¹

Which Bellingham neighborhood is your current place of residence? There were 26 different responses. The top six were:

“Outside Bellingham City limits” – 11.2%
“Columbia” – 7.5%
“Samish” – 6.6%
“Cordata” – 6.4%
“Sunnyland” – 5.7%
“Silver Beach” – 5.4%

Other responses of note were:

“Fairhaven” – 4.3%;
“Barkley” – 4.0%; and
“City Center” – 1.9%

With regard to children under the age of 19 living at home, almost three of every four (72.6%) indicated “No.” The remaining 26.1% said “Yes” and 1.2% “Prefer not to answer.”

I Want My Library To ... Survey

Each Focus Group participant and interviewee was asked by the Consultants to complete an “I Want My Library To ... survey. The survey listed seventeen services that are typically offered by public libraries throughout the country. The purpose of the survey was to help determine what services were of primary interest and importance to Bellingham residents and BPL staff.

Participants were instructed to rank their top priorities from 1 to 5. Points were weighted accordingly (#1 received 5 points, #2 received 4 points, etc.).

Combined Participation: Top Five Services

rank	points
#1 Serve as Lifelong Learning Center	116
#2 Create Young Readers	87
#3 Serve As An Inviting and Digitally Vibrant Space	56
#4 Celebrate Diversity Via Programs and Resources	38
#5 Provide Space/Assist Connect w/Online World	31

Section 3: Assessment of Current Facilities

Library Digital Services staff and City of Bellingham GIS staff were a resource for the Consultants in producing the work of this section.

Assessing Existing Library Facilities

The Consultants assessed each building's capacities to deliver service, as well as its structure. Our evaluation addresses both functional aspects of each Library and physical aspects of each building. By separating functional and physical shortcomings, we are better equipped to analyze future needs versus current resources. Our operational assessment of the functional library was performed by three Library experts. As part of this process, the Consultants interviewed COB and Library staff members familiar with each building.

Functional Assessment Tools. The tool the Consultants used to evaluate Bellingham Public Library facilities against a Modern Library baseline was a functional assessment system that rated 92 Modern Library characteristics on a scale of 0.01 to 5.00. Only items that did not presently exist at the facility or site at the time of the assessment were rated 0.00.

score	description	As a means to graphically represent the ratings for each item, a color code was assigned to five ranges of possible scores, along with a one-word descriptor of quality as shown in the matrix at left.
0.01 to 1.00	Poor	
1.01 to 2.00	Fair	
2.01 to 3.00	Average	
3.01 to 4.00	Good	For purposes of consistency, the same three members of the Consultant team evaluated all three buildings.
4.01 to 5.00	Excellent	

The results are a snapshot in time, with the understanding that buildings change periodically due to operational and maintenance issues, just as library interiors evolve due to service demands by customers and improvement by staff.

Summarizing the Consultant ratings of the three service outlets of the Bellingham Public Library:

- **Central Library**, a composite rating of 2.31, or Average.
- **Fairhaven Library**, a composite rating of 1.57, or Fair.
- **Barkley Library**, a composite rating of 1.38, or Fair.

These ratings largely reflect the age and size of the facilities. The current facilities lack:

- Modern infrastructure adaptable to current and future needs.
- Flexible, multi-use spaces.
- Energy efficient systems to support climate resiliency.

Central Library. The Average rating of 2.31 is a byproduct of the partially renovated building. The newly refurbished Main Floor might have rated Good to Excellent on its own merits – open, spacious, modern, and well-appointed with a

variety of furniture and equipment. Spaces for quiet study and research are absent, and more group study rooms would be advantageous. Low quality ratings at Central are reflected in the ratings of the Children's and Staff Areas located on the Ground and Second Floors, respectively. The Central Library lacks adequate, convenient parking.

Fairhaven Branch Library. Age and condition had a significant influence on the Fair rating of 1.57 at Fairhaven. Available space is not fully used, but the rating system gives credit to those amenities because they are present, inflating the already Fair rating. Fairhaven is missing the same system-wide items as noted above but is also missing dedicated program space for children. Available gathering spaces are located on the unstaffed floors above and below the Library proper and there is a lack of smaller specialty rooms for group study, tutoring, and quiet study. Public printing and copying is limited, as are most other customer amenities.

Quality issues are especially acute in the Teen, Children's, and Staff Areas. On the main floor, the poor entry experience for the public is problematic, as is the closing off of the original grand staircase – a limitation on vertical circulation throughout the building. While the quantity of space is a potential attribute, the quality and location of that space are limiting, especially from an operational efficiency standpoint.

Barkley Branch Library. The Fair rating of 1.38 for Barkley is due to its small amount of space – at 1,400 square feet. From a quality perspective, the limited offerings for the Children's and Teen Areas are most problematic.

Service Area Mapping

The mapping of existing library service areas is intended to identify gaps and overlaps of service provisions in Bellingham, including the Urban Growth Areas. The charge to the Consultants was that this analysis should be compatible with City of Bellingham (COB) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data systems using maps and graphic visualizations, taking into account current library locations, usage patterns, and current and projected population distribution. The Consultants were tasked with providing analysis to help BPL better understand:

- The reach/service area of existing libraries.
- Areas of the city not currently serviced by a library.
- Underserved areas of the city that need or would benefit from additional library services.

Existing BPL service outlets include:

- Central Library, 44,000 square feet
- Fairhaven Library, 10,250 square feet
- Barkley Library, 1,420 square feet
- Whatcom Community College Connection
- Bellingham Technical College Connection
- Western Washington University Connection
- Cordata Food Co-op Book Return

Customer Convenience. Mapping the locations of customers can provide a data-driven graphic depiction of how well current outlets are located, and where to locate future ones. Factoring future population growth into the mapping process can provide an educated look into determining the need for and location of future service outlets.

While limited in scope to motor vehicles, identifying the number of minutes of driving time to get from home or work to a library reveals a convenience factor of library usage. Drive-Time Analyses are used to delineate the service areas of each facility, based on cardholder residence locations. They typically show geographic gaps and overlaps in service coverage.

The definition of service areas was critical to assuring optimal service delivery and convenience for all residents of the greater community. This analysis was also fundamental in organizing data by existing Library location, and provided the following information

- Identified the area where customers live relative to a given Library.
- Mapped data points at the household level.
- Clearly defined geographic boundaries of all Library service areas.
- Utilized maps showing library users.
- Identified Library service area overlap and gaps.
- Ensured consistency of data collection inside and out of these defined boundaries, eliminating duplicate counting of households.

Findings from Service Area Mapping

Bellingham Public Library System. The vast majority of Library customers drive less than 10 minutes to get to a BPL service outlet. The conglomerated BPL Drive-Time Service Area covers over 80% of the Bellingham city limits and urban growth area.

- Central Library service area drive-time = 9.8 minutes
- Barkley Branch Library service area drive-time = 7.5 minutes
- Fairhaven Branch Library service area drive-time = 5.8 minutes

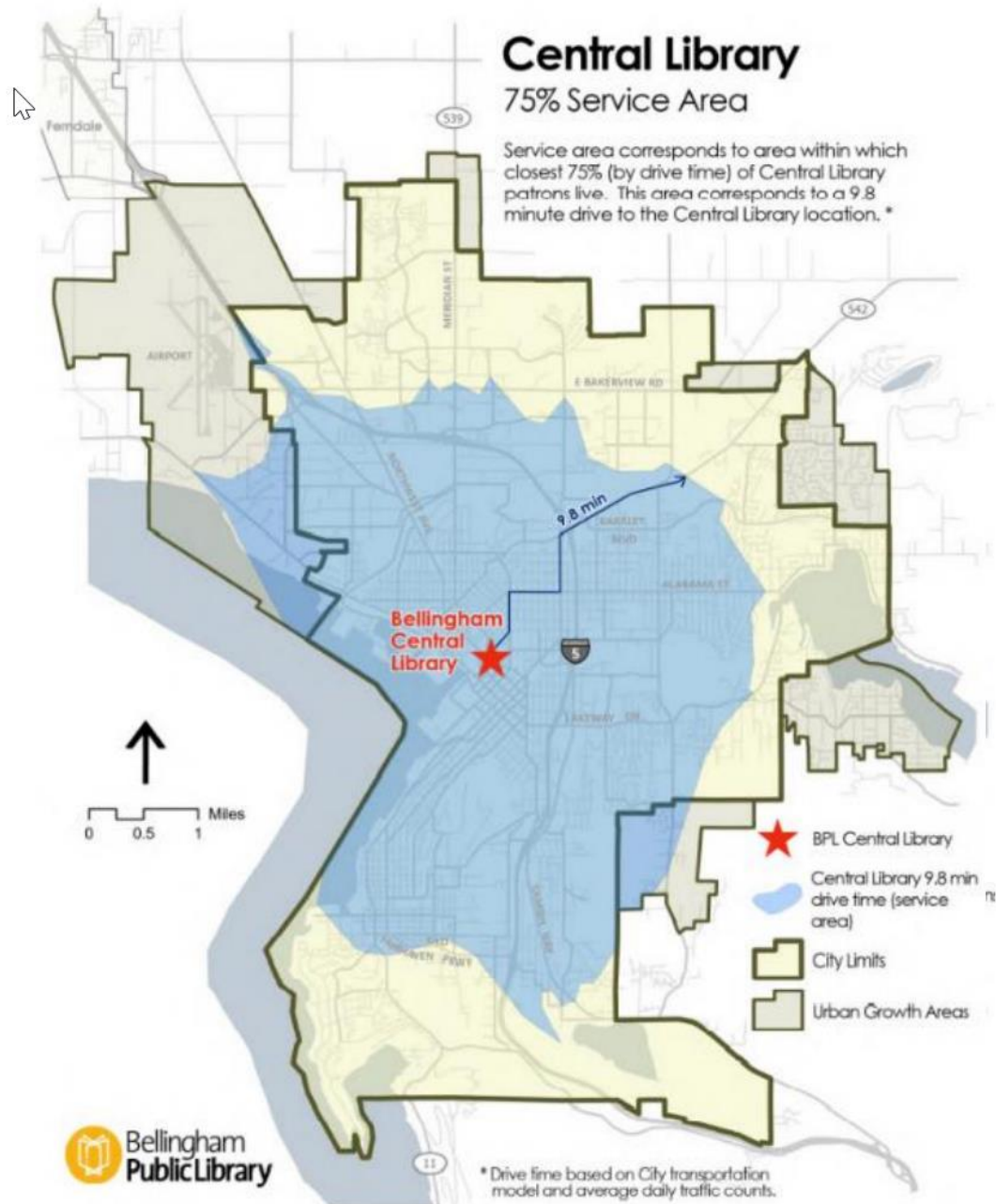


Figure 1. Central Library. The current 33,204 Central Library customers represent 88.7% of all BPL customers living within the Bellingham city limits and UGA. The Central Library service area overlaps both the Barkley and Fairhaven service areas.

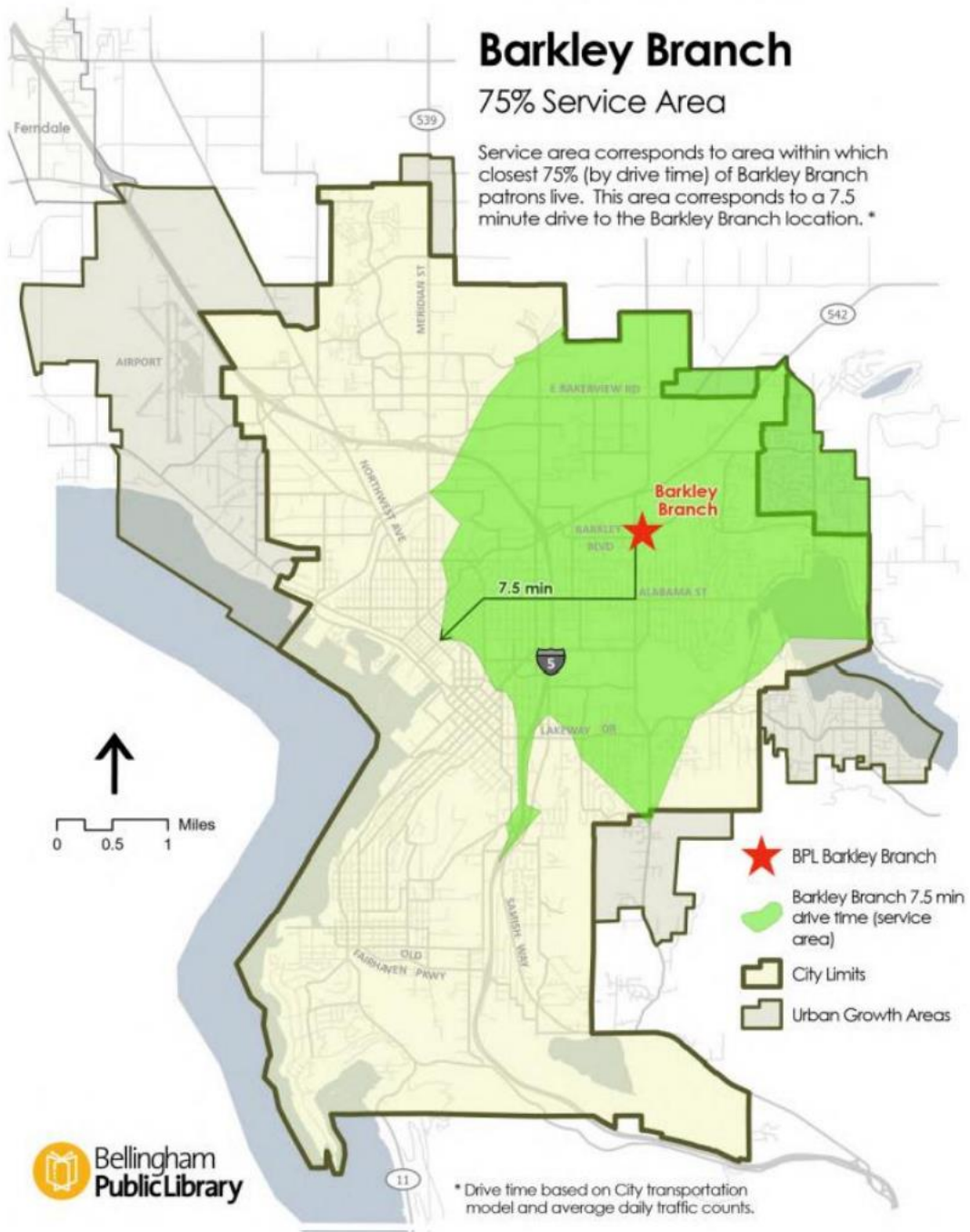


Figure 2. Barkley Branch Library. The current 1,739 Barkley Library customers represent 4.6% of all BPL customers living within the Bellingham city limits/UGA. The Barkley Library service area overlaps the Central service area but not the Fairhaven service area.

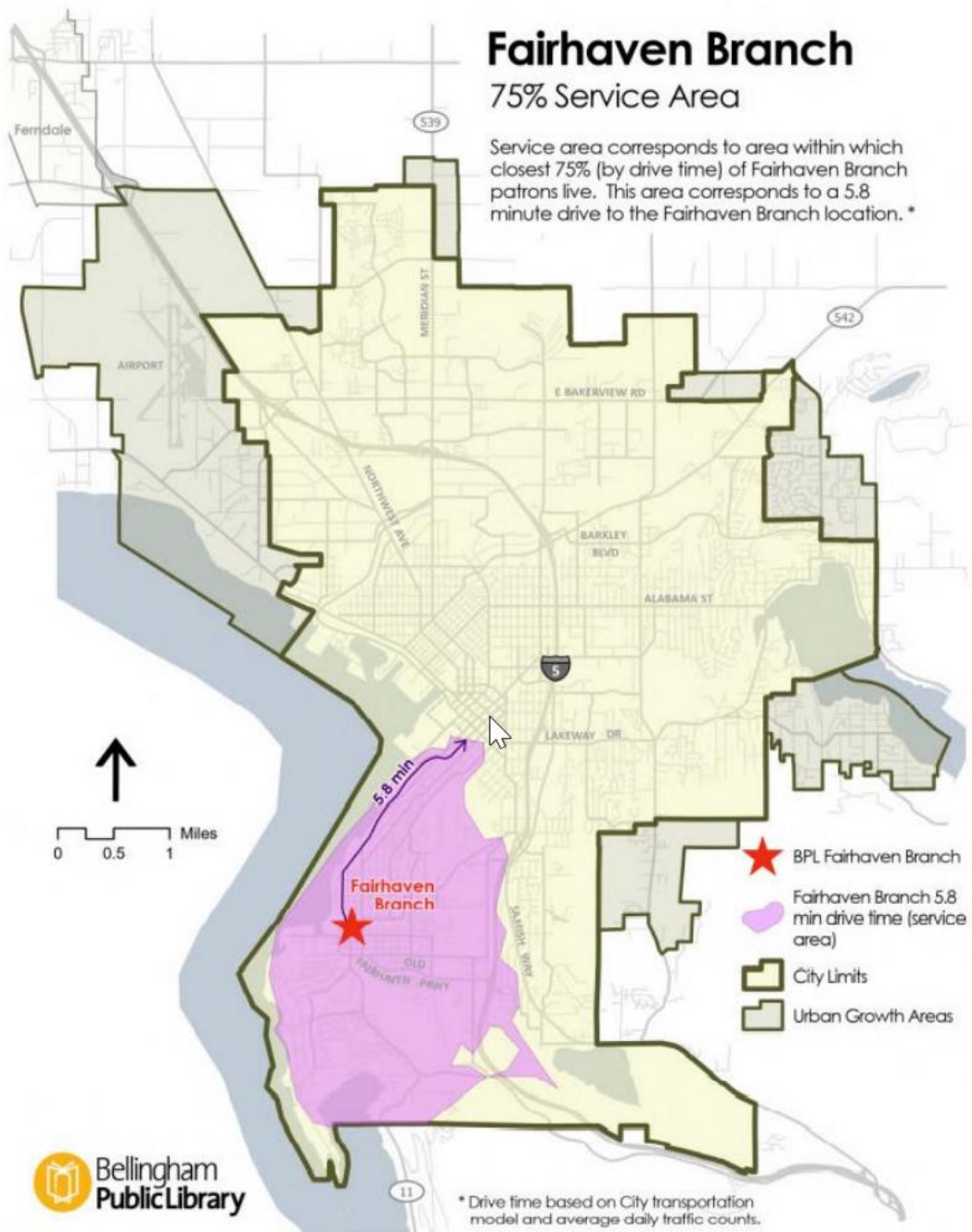


Figure 3. Fairhaven Branch Library. The current 2,473 Fairhaven Library customers represent 6.6% of all BPL customers living within the Bellingham city limits/UGA. The Fairhaven Library service area overlaps the Central service area but not the Barkley service area.

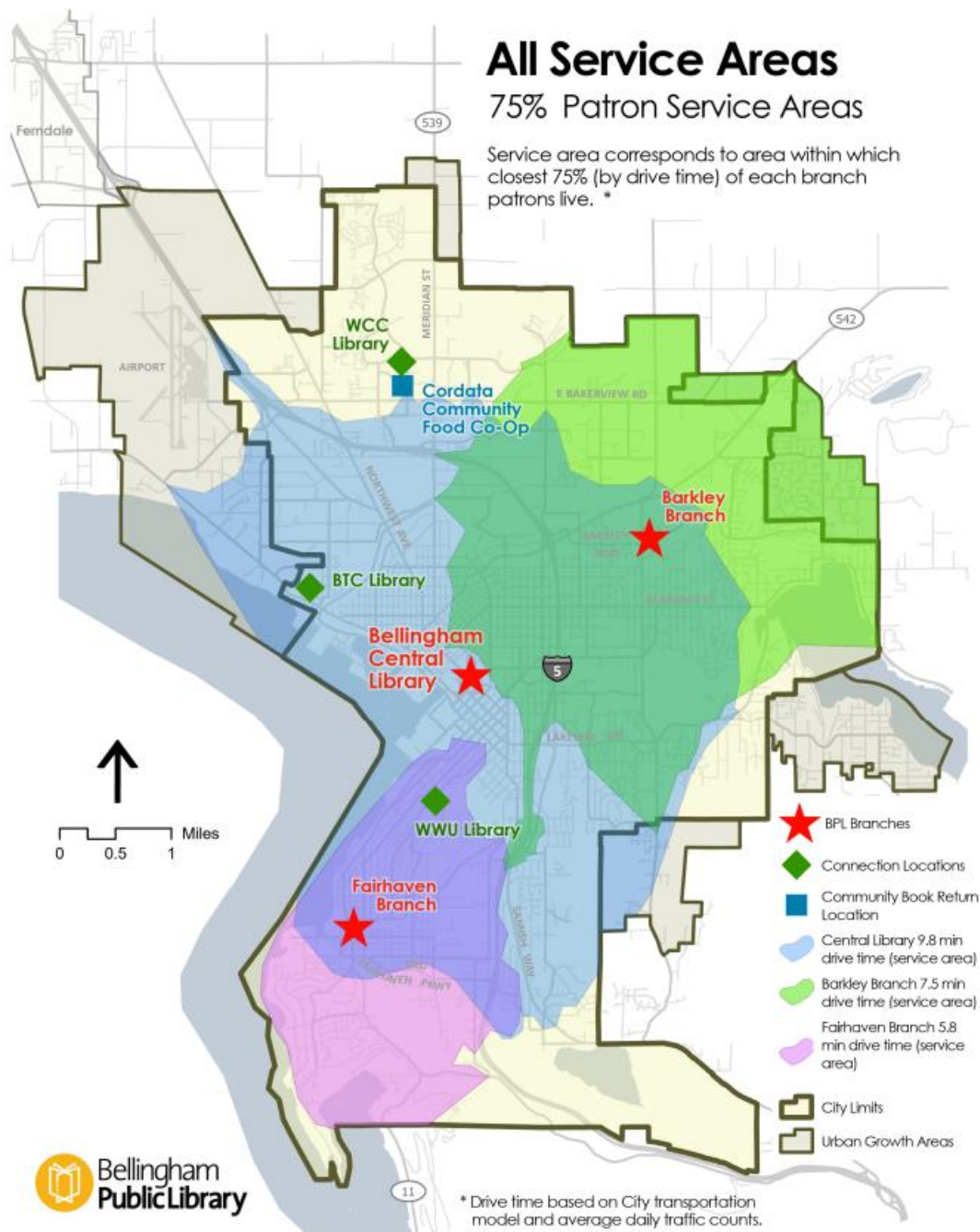


Figure 4. Service Area Gaps. This drive-time mapping exercise has identified gaps in BPL's current reach of service that can be strategically filled. The Consultants believe this service area analysis provides clear direction for the Facilities Master Plan, most especially that a new north side library is not only warranted but required to meet the future needs of the community. Only the northern gap has significant buildable land for future population growth.

The reasons for the large disparities between the number of Central and Branch Library users are not defined by this process. However, a case can be made that the limited number of hours that Barkley and Fairhaven Libraries are open each week have a significant effect in dampening use of those two Branches, especially in light of the adequate number of hours open at Central.

Section 4: Level of Service Standards

Level of Service Standards

From 2015 to 2018 the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees worked with Library management to develop a series of Level of Service (LOS) standards to evaluate and determine how resources dedicated to the Library benchmark against community needs and expectations. LOS standards were established in four major areas of Library services:

- Library facilities – square footage per capita;
- Open hours per week for Central Library and for the Library branches;
- Library materials – expenditures per capita;
- Library staffing FTE.

To develop these standards, peer libraries across the nation and libraries within the state of Washington were used as benchmarks. Comparisons with these libraries confirmed that Bellingham Public Library had a higher level of usage per capita than most libraries. This demonstrated use and demand from the community also factored into the development of these LOS standards. Each standard identifies three levels of service:

1. Low or minimal – needed to provide the most basic of library services;
2. Medium or operational – allows the library to provide all needed services;
3. High or optimal – allows the library to enhance services.

In 2017, BPL and the City of Bellingham initiated a sustainable funding study for the Library's future. The consulting firm BERK was hired to conduct the study and produce a report – "Bellingham Public Library Services and Funding Models Study," published December 2017.

On Nov. 13, 2017, BERK presented findings from the report to the Bellingham City Council. At that meeting the City Council voted unanimously (6-1, 1 excused) to direct "the Administration to give recommendations to the Library Board of Trustees to move forward with Goal [Level] 2 or 3 as a priority."

Level of Service Standards

Standard	Date of Adoption	Low/ Minimal 1	Medium/ Operational 2	High/ Optimal 3
Library Facilities-- Square ft/capita	01/19/2016	0.6	0.8	1.0
Open hours per week-- Central Library	06/21/2016	56	64	68
Open hours per week-- Branch Libraries	06/21/2016	28	36	40
Library Materials-- Expenditures/capita	03/21/2017	\$5.00	\$7.50	\$10.00
Library Staff Total Budgeted FTE	03/13/2018	50	58	64

Over the last five years, investments have been prioritized in the materials expenditure/capita standard and the Library staffing FTE standard.

BPL's facilities are currently below Level 1 – Low/Minimal Level of Service at 0.53 square feet/capita, which includes the City limits + UGA. To better align with long range planning efforts throughout the City, this Facilities Master Plan uses city limits + urban growth areas (UGA) when projecting population growth.

Consultant Evaluation. As part of this study, Bellingham was compared with 29 peer library systems. Level of Service standards for Bellingham Public Library are in alignment with cities of similar size and make-up. The one exception is hours per week at branch libraries. The Consultants recommend that BPL increase this Level of Service to better align with Central Library hours.

Section 5: Future Facility Needs Assessment

Population Growth

The 2022 population counts cited in this analysis were derived using the Bellingham GIS housing unit model. The 2045 population counts cited were derived using the draft Bellingham 2021 Buildable Lands Report data and applying service area shares to the Whatcom County Council of Governments Transportation Model and its interim 2045 population projection for Bellingham's urban growth area (UGA). To better align the Library's long-term planning with planning efforts in other City departments, all population projections include Bellingham City Limits plus Urban Growth Area (UGA).

Bellingham City Limits + UGA, Estimated Future Population 2020 to 2045

2020	101,588	2029	113,403	2038	124,535
2021	103,335	2030	114,700	2039	125,757
2022	104,571	2031	115,910	2040	126,982
2023	105,798	2032	117,157	2041	128,162
2024	107,019	2033	118,402	2042	129,359
2025	108,239	2034	119,639	2043	130,556
2026	109,543	2035	120,869	2044	131,752
2027	110,823	2036	122,093	2045	132,950
2028	112,110	2037	123,314		

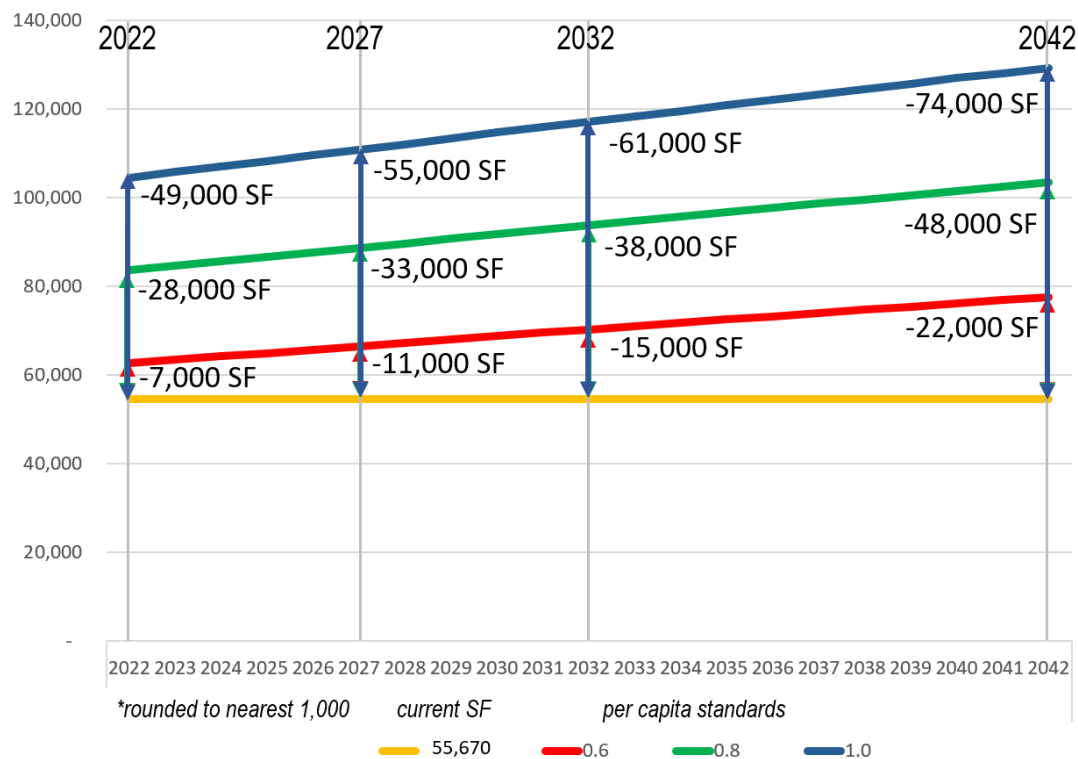
Future Facilities

The population forecast determines the additional square footage needed to achieve a higher level of service over the next 20 years. At present, the Bellingham Public Library has 55,670 square feet over three locations:

- Central Library: 44,000 square feet
- Fairhaven Branch Library: 10,250 square feet
- Barkley Branch Library: 1,420 square feet

Figure 5 on the following page charts the projected square footage shortfall over 3 planning horizons: 5-years (2027), 10-years (2032), and 20-years (2042). Population estimates are based on city limits + urban growth areas (UGA).

Figure 5: Projected Square Footage Shortfall per LOS Standards*, 2022-2042



Section 6: Facilities Plan Recommendations

The Consultants have presented facility recommendations extending to 2042 in three tiers: near-term (5 years), mid-term (10 years), and long-term (20 years). The objective is to reach the higher LOS standards of Level 2/Medium (0.8 square feet/capita) or Level 3/High (1.0 square feet/capita) in the 20-year planning horizon, as directed by City Council in 2017. Also included are suggestions for improving the space utilization of existing facilities and locating community drop boxes.

Desired Outcomes: The Facilities Master Plan recommendations provide a roadmap for attaining a higher level of service as well as improving the usability of existing spaces. Additional desired outcomes include greater equity of access to City services, and library facilities that are operationally sustainable, cost effective, and climate resilient.

Near-Term Priorities (5 years)

- *Central Library* – Renovate the remaining 2 floors of the Central Library, improve space utilization and functionality, upgrade HVAC system.
- *Fairhaven Branch Library* – Plan for rehabilitation to improve space utilization and functionality, respecting the original intended use and the exterior fabric of the building through very minimal exterior design changes. The historic nature of the building may facilitate grant funding.
- *North side* – Establish a library presence on the growing north side of Bellingham.

Mid-Term Priorities (10 years)

- *Fairhaven Branch Library* – Complete rehabilitation to improve space utilization and functionality.
- *Barkley Branch Library* – Increase library presence on east side of Bellingham / Barkley branch.

Long-Term Priorities (20 years)

- *Central library* – Evaluate square footage needs at Central Library as needed to achieve the desired Level of Service.
- *Branch Libraries* – Evaluate square footage needs at branches as needed to achieve the desired Level of Service.

Optimal Space Utilization

As part of the facilities assessment, the Consultants evaluated the Central and Fairhaven Libraries, including the viability of renovating each. Each facility has some utility remaining as a library, given their respective ages of 71 and 118 years, yet significant modifications would serve each facility well.

Central Library. The Consultants applaud BPL's efforts to pursue further renovations to match recent improvements to the main floor. While improving the interior environment, the planned renovations do not add square footage – functional space needed to improve BPL's LOS standards. About one-third of the proposed budget for these renovations is slated for HVAC improvements, highlighting the advanced age of the building and its infrastructure.

The existing closed stacks core of the building, which is not publicly accessible, creates impediments to efficient use of space on multiple floors.

Fairhaven Branch Library. Being listed in the National Register of Historic Places is an honor that comes with extra responsibilities. The Secretary of the Interior Guidelines and Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can be excellent resources for COB. Listing in the National Register makes property owners eligible for government grants for historic preservation.

The Consultants are recommending significant interior modifications to building infrastructure systems at Fairhaven. Very minimal alterations to the exterior are required. Key to the renovation is the addition of a second elevator connecting all three floors, located near the original main entrance.

The Consultants suggest the best use of the basement would be to house a Children's Library and related Staff Workroom. Utilizing the existing grade-level entrance will enhance security and ease of entry for children and families.

Potential Locations for Stand-Alone Drop Boxes

The Consultants analyzed potential locations for stand-alone drop boxes for the return of BPL items. The purpose of a drop box is many-fold: to provide customer convenience; get borrowed items processed back into the system faster; and market BPL.

Prior to the Covid pandemic, BPL drop boxes were located at grocery stores throughout Bellingham and were very popular. People liked the convenience of dropping off library books while shopping. BPL has raised community funds to replace the drop boxes – pending Consultant recommendations about where to locate them. One such drop box is currently in operation at the Cordata Community Food Co-Op, located between Bellis Fair Mall and Whatcom Community College.

Location Selection Methodology. Using the drive-time service area concept, the Consultants applied a six-minute parameter to locations in the three gap areas.

Criteria for selecting locations within each gap area were:

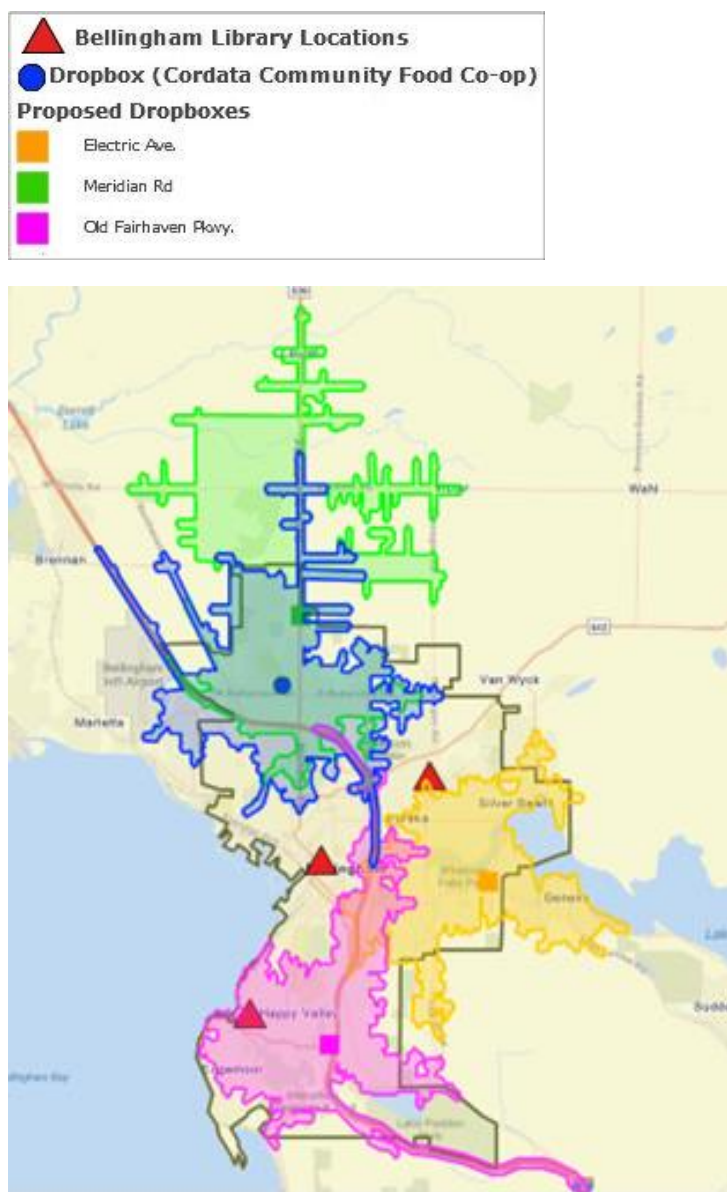
- Locations that filled the geographic gaps between the three existing BPL Branch Libraries.
- Locations on a major vehicular thoroughfare(s) for ease of access from various parts of the city or Whatcom County.

- Co-locations with other retail functions, ideally a grocery store or other food service function, serving to drive traffic to multiple businesses.
- Locations with a paved parking lot that could allow for drive-up drop-off, so drivers are not required to exit their vehicle.

The Consultants identified three sites that met all of the selection criteria, as depicted in Figure 6 showing the 6-minute drive times for the three proposed locations and the existing Co-Op drop box. Addresses of the proposed sites are:

- Guide Meridian Road near the intersection with Horton Road.
- Electric Avenue near the intersection with Lakeway Drive.
- Old Fairhaven Parkway, adjacent to the intersection with Interstate Highway 5.

Figure 6. Proposed & Existing Drop Box Locations with 6-minute Drive Time Service Areas





City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

MEMORANDUM

TO: BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

FROM: REBECCA JUDD, LIBRARY DIRECTOR; RICK OSEN, CHAIR, LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CC: MAYOR SETH FLEETWOOD

SUBJECT: LIBRARY FACILITIES MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

DATE: September 12, 2022

Earlier this year, the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees, in consultation with City Administration, contracted with Godfrey's Associates, Inc to develop a long-term strategy to address future BPL facilities needs. The study supports the current BPL Strategic Plan and addresses what is needed to serve a growing population over the next 20 years.

Over a period of three years from 2016-2018, BPL developed a series of Level of Service (LOS) standards based on a survey of national library norms. The four standards include: Library facilities (square ft/capita), open hours per week, materials (expenditures/capita) and staff (full time equivalents). Three levels were established: 1 - Low/Minimal, 2 - Medium/Operational, and 3 - High/Optimal. These LOS standards were reviewed by Council on November 13, 2017 and the Council voted to "direct the Administration to give recommendations to the Library Board of Trustees to move forward with Goal [Level] 2 or 3 as a priority."

The Facilities Master Plan addresses the Level of Service standard for Library facilities. The facility LOS standards are:

<i>standard</i>	<i>1-Low/Minimal</i>	<i>2-Medium/Operational</i>	<i>3-High/Optimal</i>
square ft/capita	0.6	0.8	1.0

BPL's facilities are currently below the 1-Low/Minimal level of service at 0.53 sf/capita, which includes the City limits + urban growth areas (UGA).

As part of their scope of work, Godfrey's Associates, Inc conducted a community input program, evaluated BPL's existing facilities, analyzed national trends and peer libraries, and mapped BPL service areas.

The recommendations are presented in near-term (5 years), medium-term (10 years) and long-term (20 years) tiers.

An Executive Summary of the draft report is included in the Council packet as well as the presentation slides. Representatives from Godfrey's Associates, the Chair of the BPL Board of Trustees, and the Library Director will be available to discuss the proposed recommendations.

Acknowledgements

PROJECT TEAM

Rick Osen, Chair, Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees
Jim McCabe, Vice Chair, Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees
Rebecca Judd, Library Director
Jennifer Vander Ploeg, Head of Library Public Services and Operations
Carol Rofkar, Public Works Superintendent of Traffic, Communications, Facilities & Fleet

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rick Osen, Chair

Jim McCabe, Vice Chair

Rebecca Craven

Kristy Van Ness

Melissa Morin

Kristina Martens*, City Council Liaison

*Ex Officio Member

RECOMMENDATION ACTION: Information / Discussion

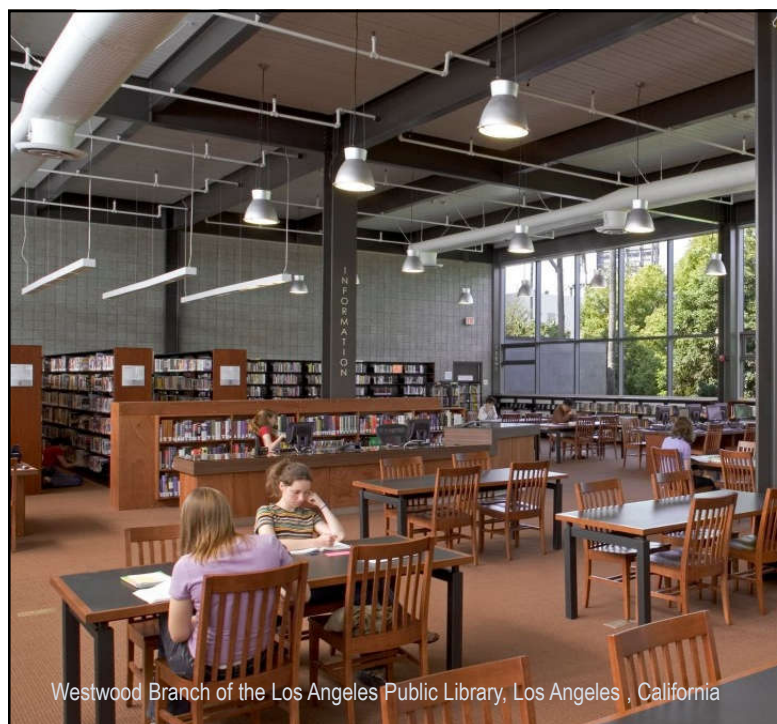


**Godfrey's Associates
Library Planners &
Consultants**

- National library practice
- Extensive expertise with public library systems
- Focus on efficient facility planning to control operational costs

The photograph shows a modern library interior with high ceilings, large windows, and colorful armchairs. Bookshelves are visible in the background. The floor is covered with a patterned carpet. The lighting is bright and even.

Otis College Library, Los Angeles, California



Westwood Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles , California

Master Plan Methodology

Godfrey's used quantitative & qualitative research to inform our data-driven findings, conclusions and recommendations

- Multiple community engagement forums and interviews
- Peer library, demographics and industry trends analysis
- Level of Service (LOS) standards compliance

Community Input

Over 1,000 participants:

- 18 stakeholder interviews
- 13 focus groups
- 980 online survey responses



Cedar Rapids Public Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Existing Facilities

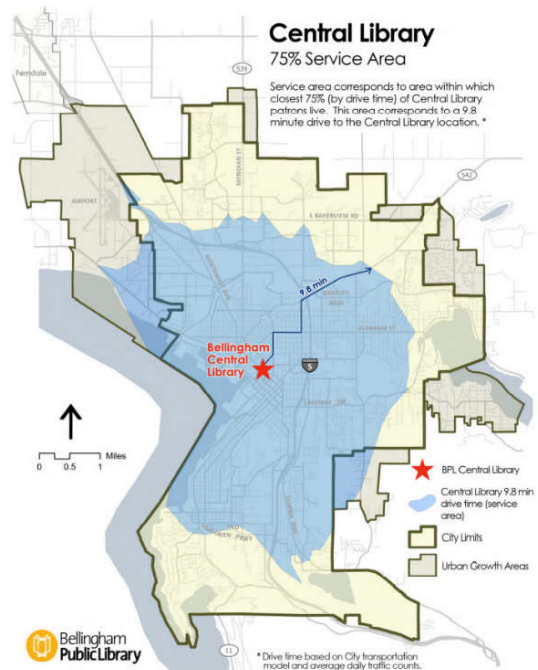
Overall, Bellingham Public Libraries do not have:

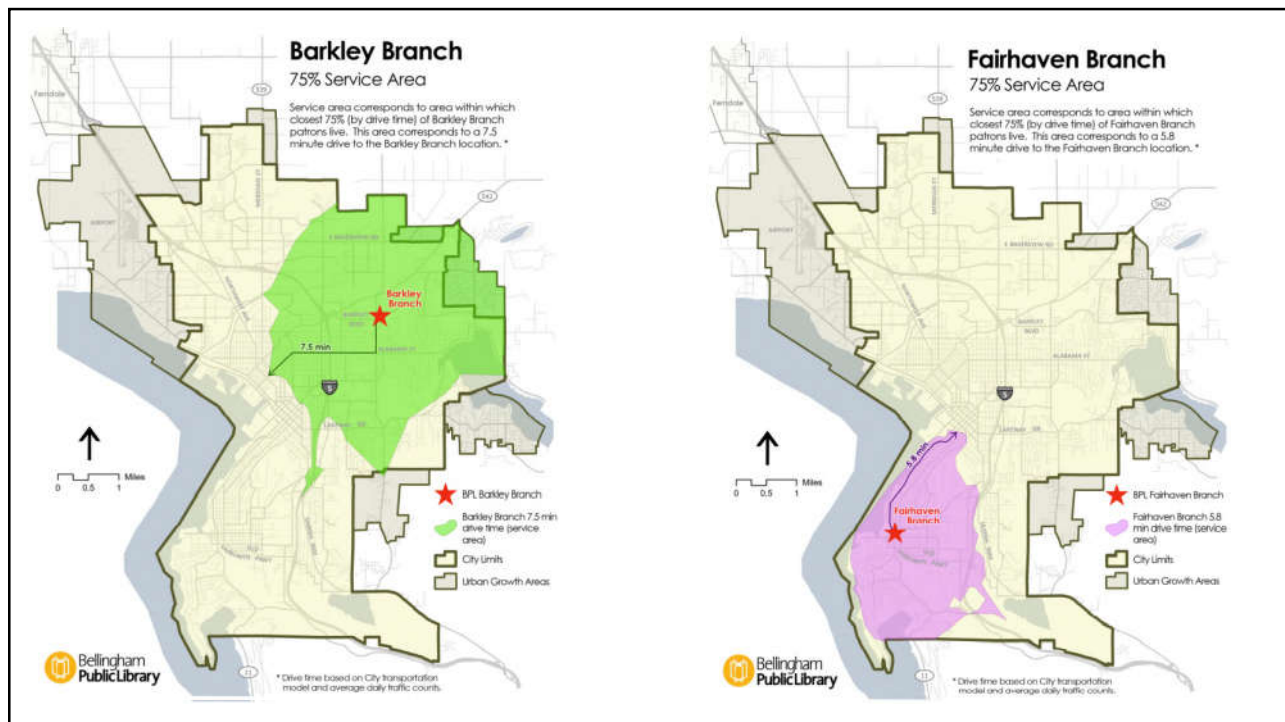
- Modern infrastructure adaptable to current & future needs
- Flexible, multi-use spaces
- Energy efficient systems to support climate resiliency



Service Area Mapping

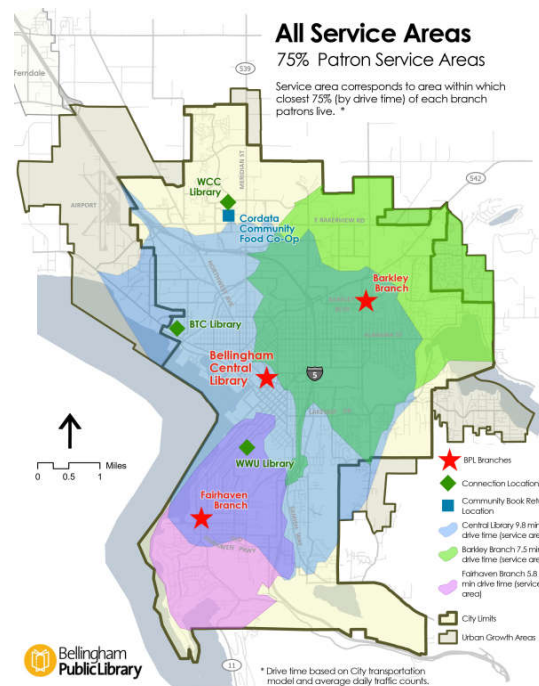
- Central Library is within 9.8 minutes of average drive time
- Barkley Library is within 7.5 minutes of drive time
- Fairhaven Library is within 5.8 minutes of drive time





Service Area Gaps

- Service gap in the growing north side of the city
- Library hours open would appear to influence historic usage



Level of Service Standards

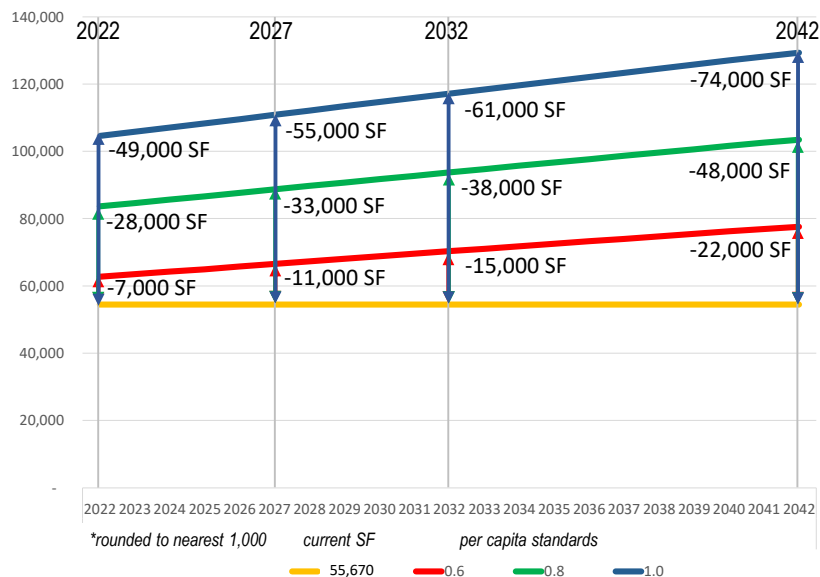
Bellingham was compared with 29 peer library systems pre-Covid (2019). BPL's adopted LOS facility standard for square feet per capita is consistent nationally:

- 0.60 (level 1-low/minimal)
- 0.80 (level 2-medium/operational)
- 1.00 (level 3-high/optimal)



Billings Public Library, Billings, Montana

Square Footage Shortfall per LOS Standards*



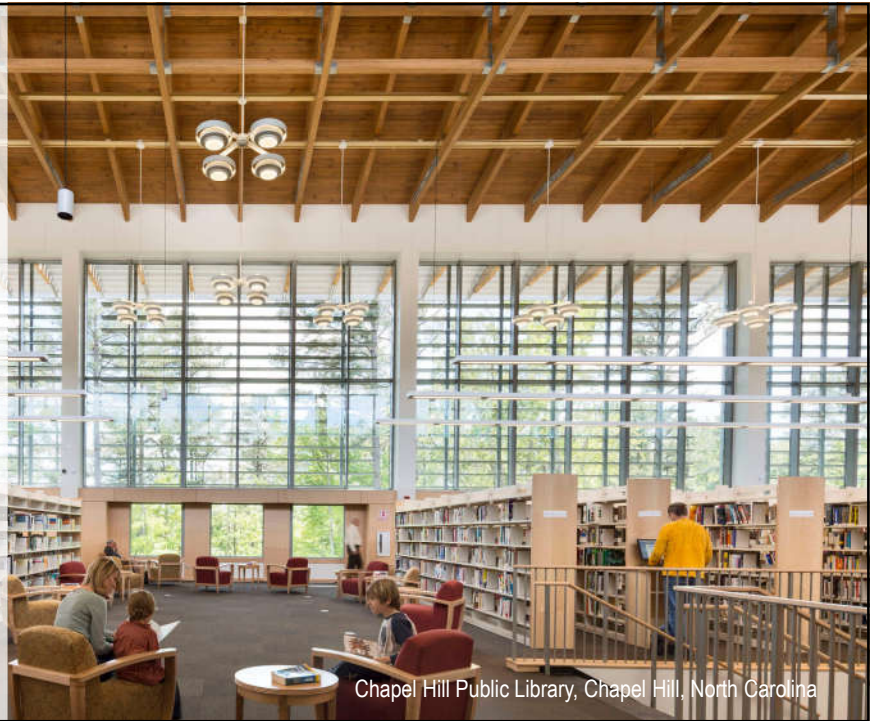
Gaps in square footage (SF) per capita are based on city limits + UGA population growth estimates over 3 planning horizons:

- 5-year (2027)
- 10-year (2032)
- 20-year (2042)

Near-Term Priorities

Recommended 5-year goals:

- Renovate the remaining 2 floors of the Central Library
- Plan for rehabilitation of Fairhaven Library
- Establish a Library presence on the north side of the city



Chapel Hill Public Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Mid-Term Priorities

Recommended 10-year goals:

- Increase Library presence in Barkley/ east side of the city
- Complete rehabilitation of Fairhaven Library



Chapel Hill Public Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina



CARBON NEUTRAL

Desired Outcomes

- Improve Level of Service & use of existing spaces
- Increase equity of access to City services
- Create purpose-built, operationally sustainable & resilient library facilities

LEED

EQUITY

RESILIENT

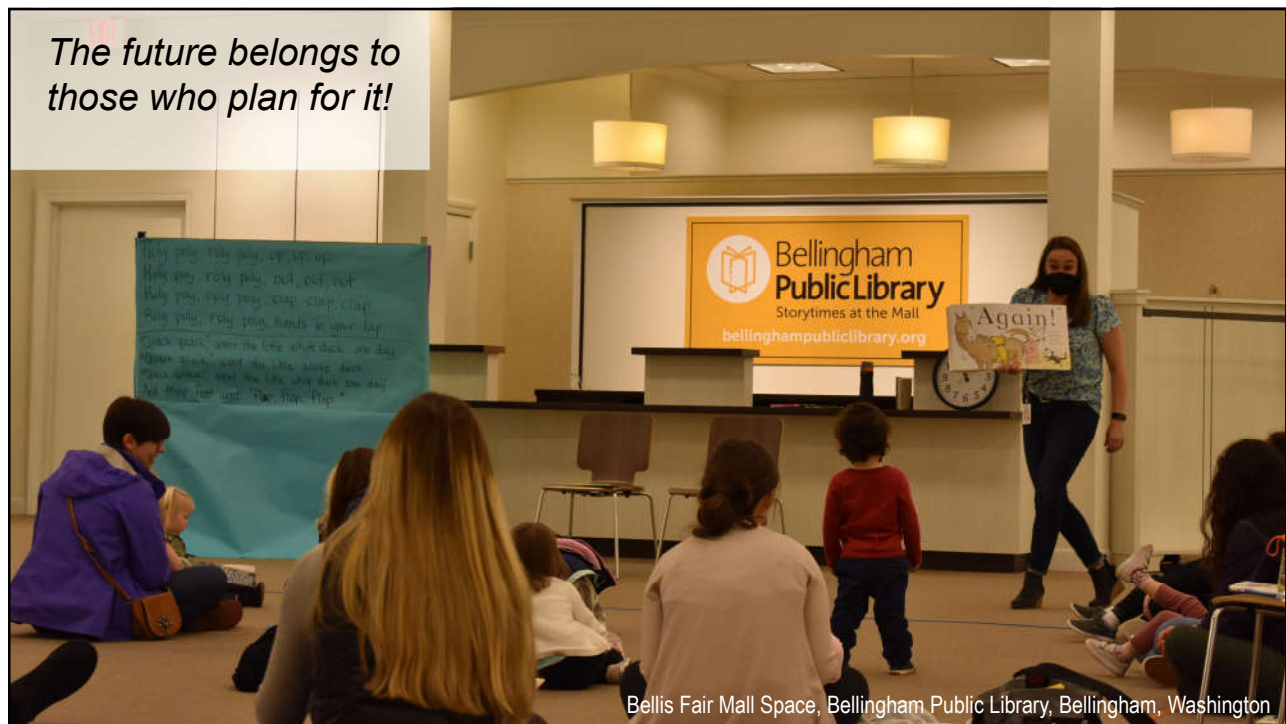
WELLBEING

WATER

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

SUSTAINABLE

*The future belongs to
those who plan for it!*



Bellis Fair Mall Space, Bellingham Public Library, Bellingham, Washington



Bellingham Public Library Facilities Master Plan Recommendations

Contact information: Rebecca Judd
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