BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

NOTICE OF MEETING
REGULAR MEETING
of TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026, 3:30 p.m.

Publication of the agenda and the approximate times are a guide to, and not a limitation on, the activities of Trustees. Order of agenda items may be adjusted.

Central Library, 210 Central Avenue, Bellingham, Washington
Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA	TIME (approx.)

We acknowledge that we gather on territory that has been the traditional and ancestral homeland to the Lhaq'temish (the Lummi People), the Nooksack People, and other Coast Salish tribes of this region Since Time Immemorial.

We honor our shared responsibility to this land and these waters, we commit to learning from Indigenous wisdom, and we strive to repair and deepen our relationships as neighbors and friends.

1. **Call to order and introductions** — 1 min

2. **Approve/modify agenda** — 1 min

3. **Public comment** — 3 min
   This time is set aside for members of the public to make comments.
   Remarks will be limited to three minutes.

4. **Consent agenda (see packet materials)** — 5 min
   All matters listed on the consent agenda are considered routine and may be approved in a single motion. A Trustee may ask that an item be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately.

   - **Communications and FYI**
   - **Minutes:** June 16, 2026: Regular Board Meeting
   - **Library performance & activity measures:** June 2026
   - **Financial reports**
     Claims: June 2026
     YTD report: June 2026

5. **Reports** — 5 min
   - Board Chair
   - Library Board members
   - City Council liaison
   - Friends of Bellingham Public Library
   - Library Director (see packet materials)

Time check: 3:45

6. Central Library renovation update • Rebecca Judd, Director; Jen Vander Ploeg, Head of Operations; Caleb Savage, Public Works Project Manager; Carol Rofkar, Public Works Assistant Director – Internal Services		10 min
7. 2027 Budget development update (see packet materials) • Rebecca Judd, Director		5 min
8. **Level Of Service: Staff Total FTE - Action item (see packet materials)** • Rebecca Judd, Director		5 min
	Time check:	**4:05**
9. Bellingham Public Library Service Level: Cost and Funding Options – Discussion (see packet materials) • Rebecca Judd, Director and Kristy Van Ness, Vice Chair		20 min
10. Fundraising Committee update • Kristy Van Ness, Vice Chair		5 min
	Time check:	**4:30**
11. Day Center update • Rebecca Judd, Director		5 min
12. Director review update • Shirin Deylami, Trustee and Deborra Garrett, Trustee		5 min
	Time check:	**4:40**
13. New business		3 min
14. Agenda items for next meeting		2 min
	Time check:	**4:45**
15. Adjourn		

Accessibility:

The Bellingham Public Library Lecture Room is ADA accessible. Elevator access to the lower floor is available at the Central Avenue entrance. If you require a sign interpreter or other accommodation, please allow the library 48 hours' notice. For additional accommodation, contact the Administrative Assistant at 360-778-7220 in advance of the meeting.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting: Tuesday, August 18, 2026 – 3:30 p.m.
Location: Lecture Room, Central Library, 210 Central Avenue
Bellingham, Washington

Bellingham Public Library

Communications & FYI

- *Cascadia Daily News* **June 22, 2026** Blaine wants to build library, daycare, housing on city-owned land*
- *The Atlantic* **July 8, 2026** The End of Reading Is Here*
- *The Seattle Times* **July 9, 2026** When even wealthy towns like Clyde Hill are going broke*
- *The Seattle Times* **July 14, 2026** Prop. No. 1, property tax levy for the Seattle Public Library: Vote No*

* This article link points to the Newsbank database. To read the article you will need to log in to your Library account using your Barcode Number and Password/PIN.

Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – Central Library Lecture Room
3:30 p.m.

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Library Board of Trustees of the Bellingham Public Library as authorized by RCW 27.12.210 and SEC. 7.02 Charter of the City of Bellingham.

Board Members Present:	Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness, Kendra Bradford, Deborra Garrett, and Shirin Deylami
City Council Library Liaison:	Daniel Hammill
Library Management Staff:	Rebecca Judd, Bethany Hoglund, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Madeline Rosenvinge
FOBPL Representative:	Carol Comeau, Friends of BPL Board Liaison
Guest Presenter:	None.

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:31 p.m. by Chair, Rebecca Craven.

Approve/modify agenda: Shirin Deylami moved to approve the agenda. Deborra Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: None.

Consent agenda: Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the May 19, 2026 Regular meeting minutes, the May 2026 performance and activity measures and financial reports, and the June 1, 2026 Special meeting minutes. Deborra seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report: Chair Rebecca Craven provided brief scheduling updates, noting she will miss the next Board meeting and that Kendra will miss the August meeting.

Board member reports:

- None.

City Council liaison report: Councilmember Hammill summarized recent City Council activities. He reported that the Council received a presentation on Bellingham's new Homeshare Program with vendor Nesterly, which highlighted the number of unused bedrooms in the city and the goal to help provide more affordable housing in Bellingham. He further discussed progress on the Regional Fire Authority (RFA) proposal, which aims to create an estimated $20 million budget cushion for the City and is expected to go before voters in February. He will continue to provide updates as the process moves forward.

Friends of BPL report: Carol Comeau noted that the next book sale is scheduled for late September and may be the last one before construction begins.

Library Director report: Director Judd reported ongoing work to sunset the HEART program by year-end. She thanked Katrina Buckman for preparing the program's statistical impact summary. She also noted that September 29 marks the 75th anniversary of the Central Library building and that Annette Bagley is coordinating with Jeff Jewell at the Museum on commemorative activities. Kristy Van Ness acknowledged the impressive range of staff accomplishments and expressed appreciation for their work. Rebecca added that Summer Reading is well underway, and Bethany Hoglund and Bernice Chang recently appeared in a promotional video encouraging participation in the Bellingham Bells game, where attendees may enter free with a library card.

Central Library Renovation Update: Jen Vander Ploeg reported that design work, scheduling, budget documentation, and FF&E planning will continue through June and July. The project is expected to enter the bidding phase from mid-August through mid-September. Construction and the relocation of operations to City Hall are anticipated in December or January. Jen and Caleb, Public Works Project Manager, also provided updates on the Bellis Fair temporary space, noting that keycard access has been installed, lighting repairs are underway, RFQs for cleaning services are in process, and signage needs are being assessed. Updates on the Central Library included progress on the design of the children's desk and salmon tank, workstation layout planning, casework design for kitchenettes and breakrooms, wiring and cabling work, the review of demolition plans to identify items to retain, development of initial designs for the children's space and shelving layout, and pending updates on main-floor design changes. Samples of finishes and other design documents were reviewed (*see attachments 1, 2, 3, & 4 at the end of the minutes*).

2027 Budget Development Update: Director Judd explained that all departments have been instructed to prepare a 3 percent budget reduction exercise, with a deadline of July 10. This precedes the next Board meeting. Rebecca will email budget proposal materials for review by Board members.

Level of Service, Gap Analysis – Discussion and Action Item: Chair Rebecca Craven thanked Trustees for their work during the recent special meeting. Director Judd reviewed updates incorporated into the report and summarized the rationale behind the recommendations, emphasizing the connection between proposed increases, anticipated RFA impacts, and the City Council's longstanding directive to move toward medium-to-high service levels. The Board discussed how best to frame the document, including highlighting the rising operational costs of library service, the cumulative effect of past budget reductions, and the inflationary impacts on materials spending compared to 2017 levels. Trustees also considered preparing parallel scenarios for both RFA passage and failure, noting that the latter could require further reductions and possibly a levy measure in 2028.

Following discussion of the options, Shirin Deylami made a motion to recommend to city leadership the Level of Service increase outlined in Option 1(with minor adjustments to the open hours schedule to improve consistency). Deborra Garrett seconded. The motion passed.

Fundraising Committee update: Kristy Van Ness reported that total funds raised to date are $2,531,479.15. The recent Capital Campaign Committee donor engagement event was well received, with positive feedback on event flow and opportunities for refinement. The next event is scheduled for June 30, and monthly events will continue throughout the summer.

Day Center update: Rebecca Judd reported that the provider contract for the day center is still in the process of being finalized.

Director Review Update: A Director Review report will be presented at next month's meeting.

New Business:

- None

Agenda items for next meeting:

- FTE proposal
- Director review update

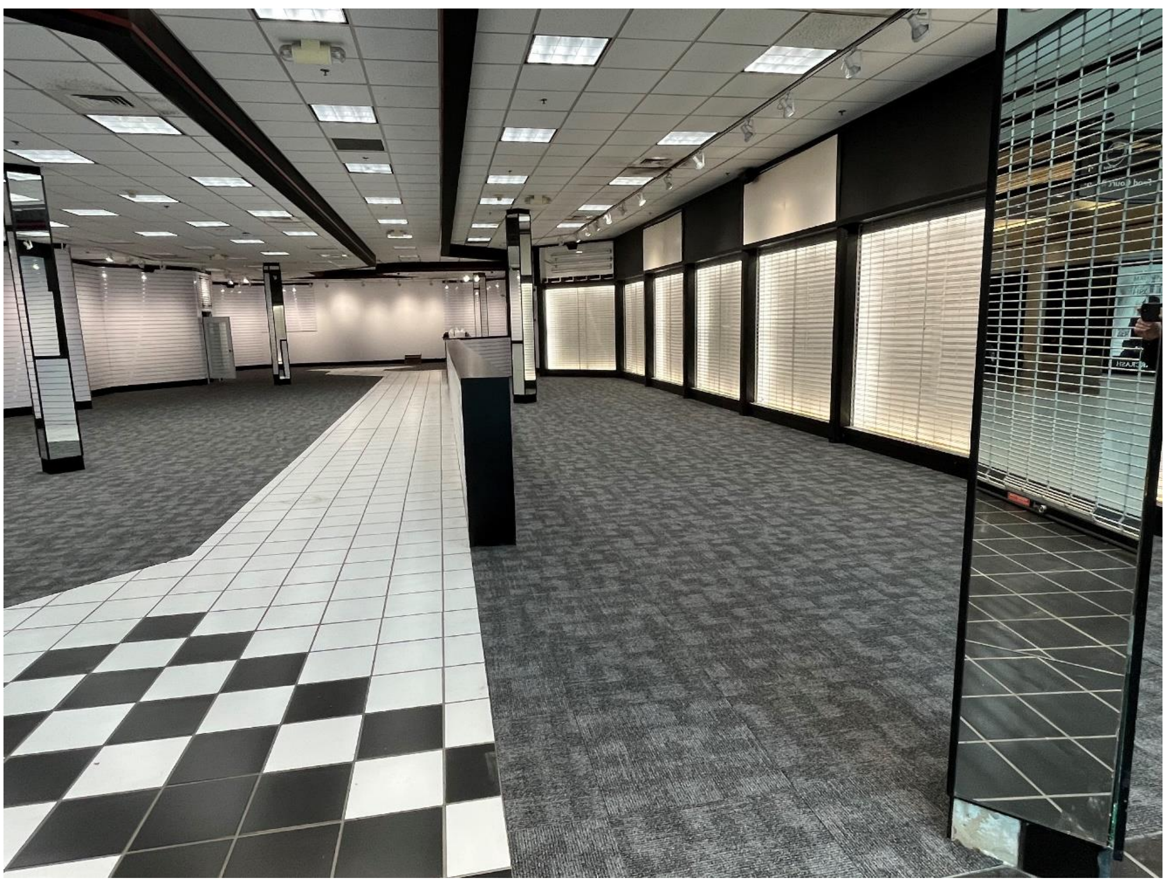
Meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

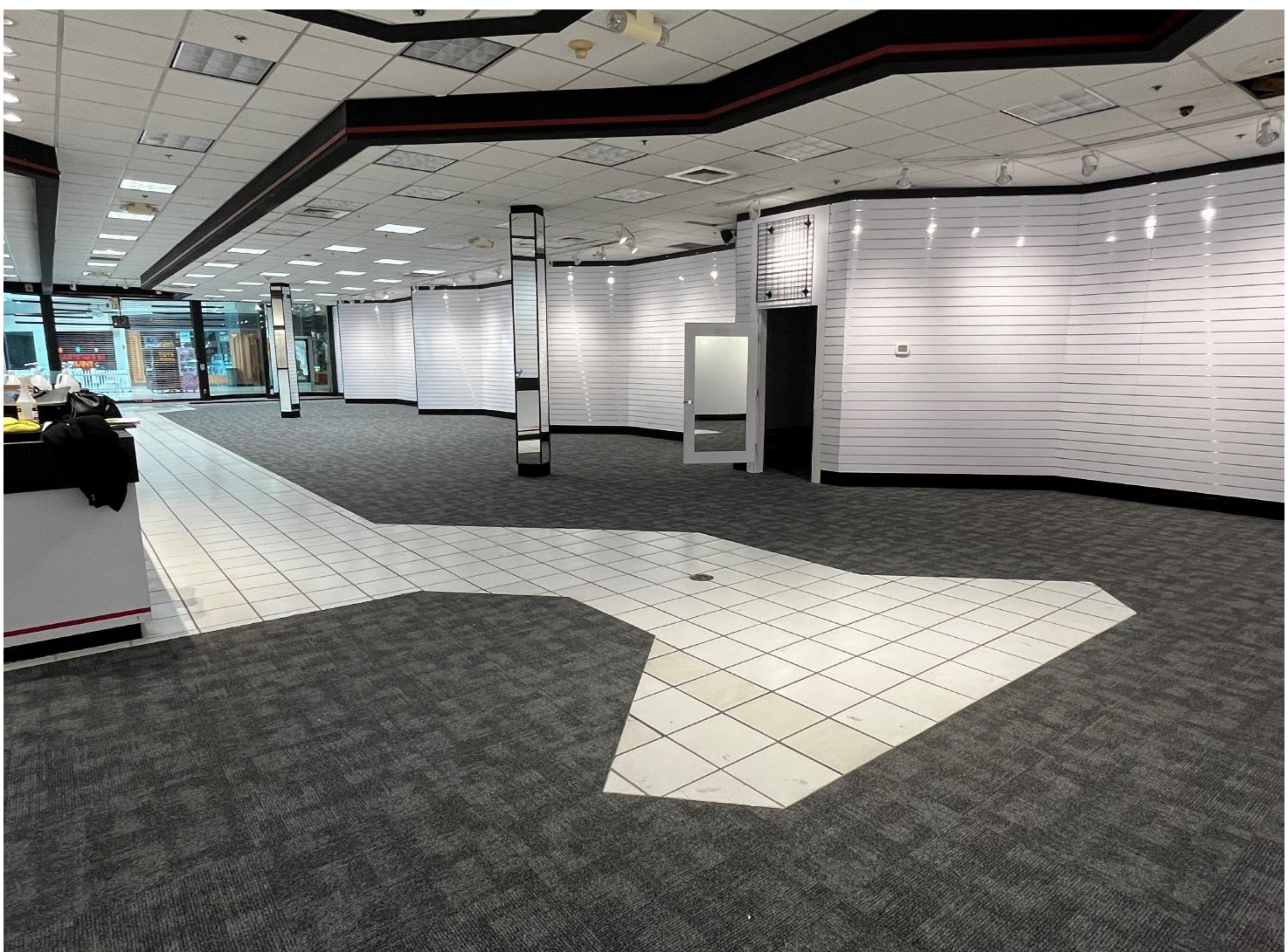
Next Regular Library Board Meeting – Tuesday, July 21 2026 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Bellis Fair – Suite 614






EXIT


AUTHORIZED
ENTRY
ONLY

Bellingham Central Library Renovation

June 03, 2026

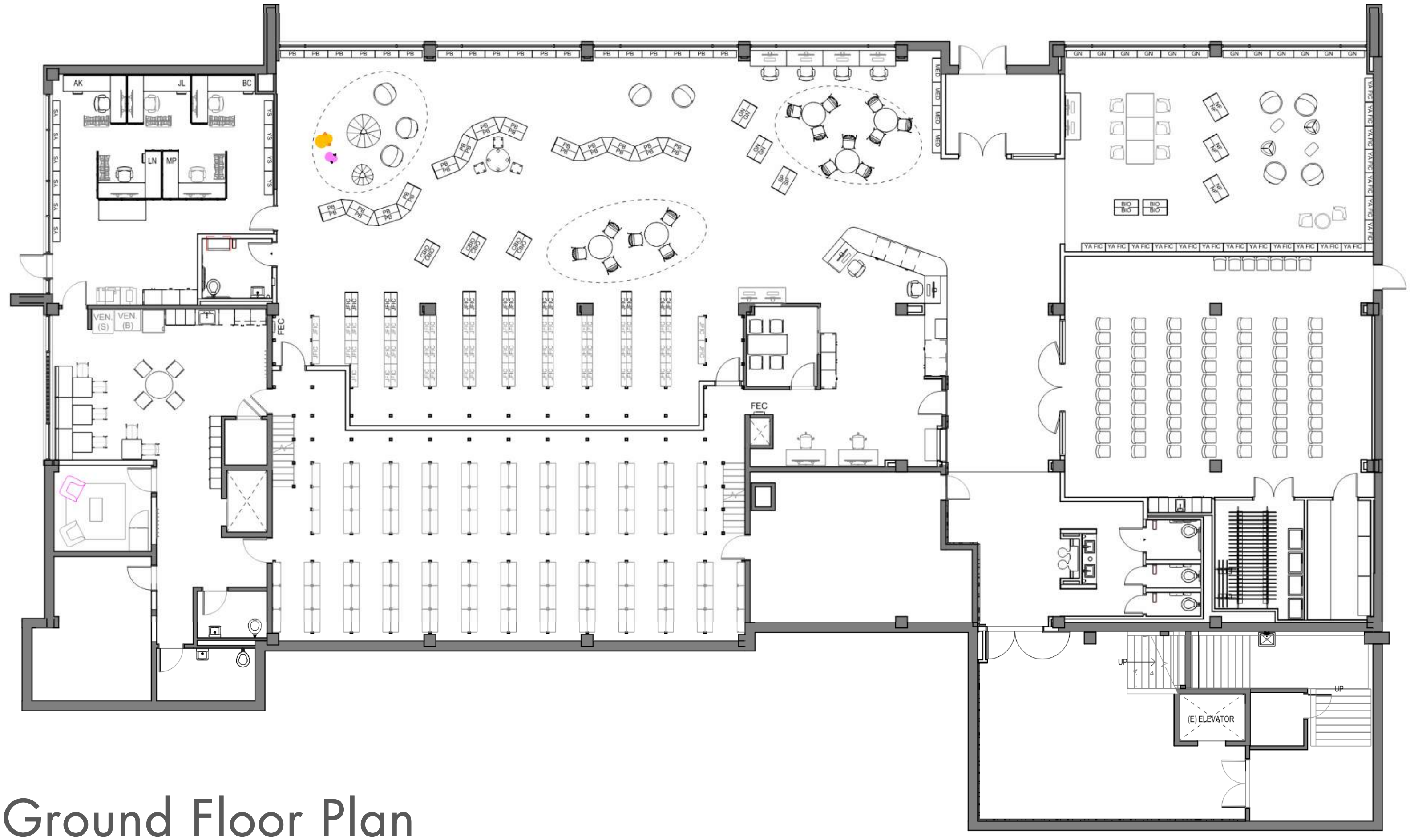
Agenda

- What We Heard
- Ground Floor Furniture & Workstations
- Ground Floor Shelving
- Level 2 Furniture & Workstations
- Level 2 Shelving
- Next Steps

What We Heard

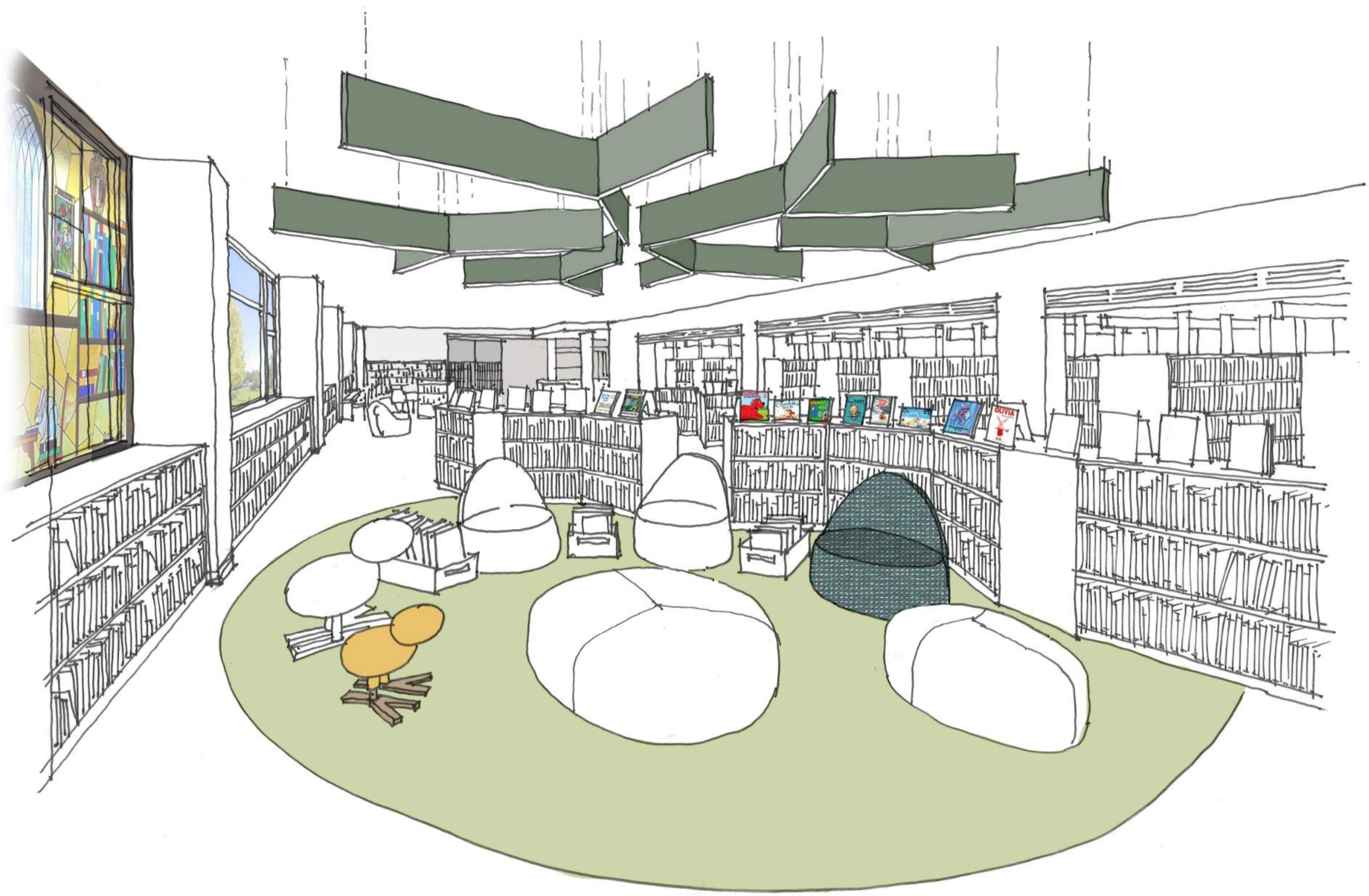
- Distinct identities desired for Teens and Children
- Staff areas should feel uplifting, comfortable, and restorative.
- More color, pattern, and warmth are desired throughout the space.
- Wood is good!

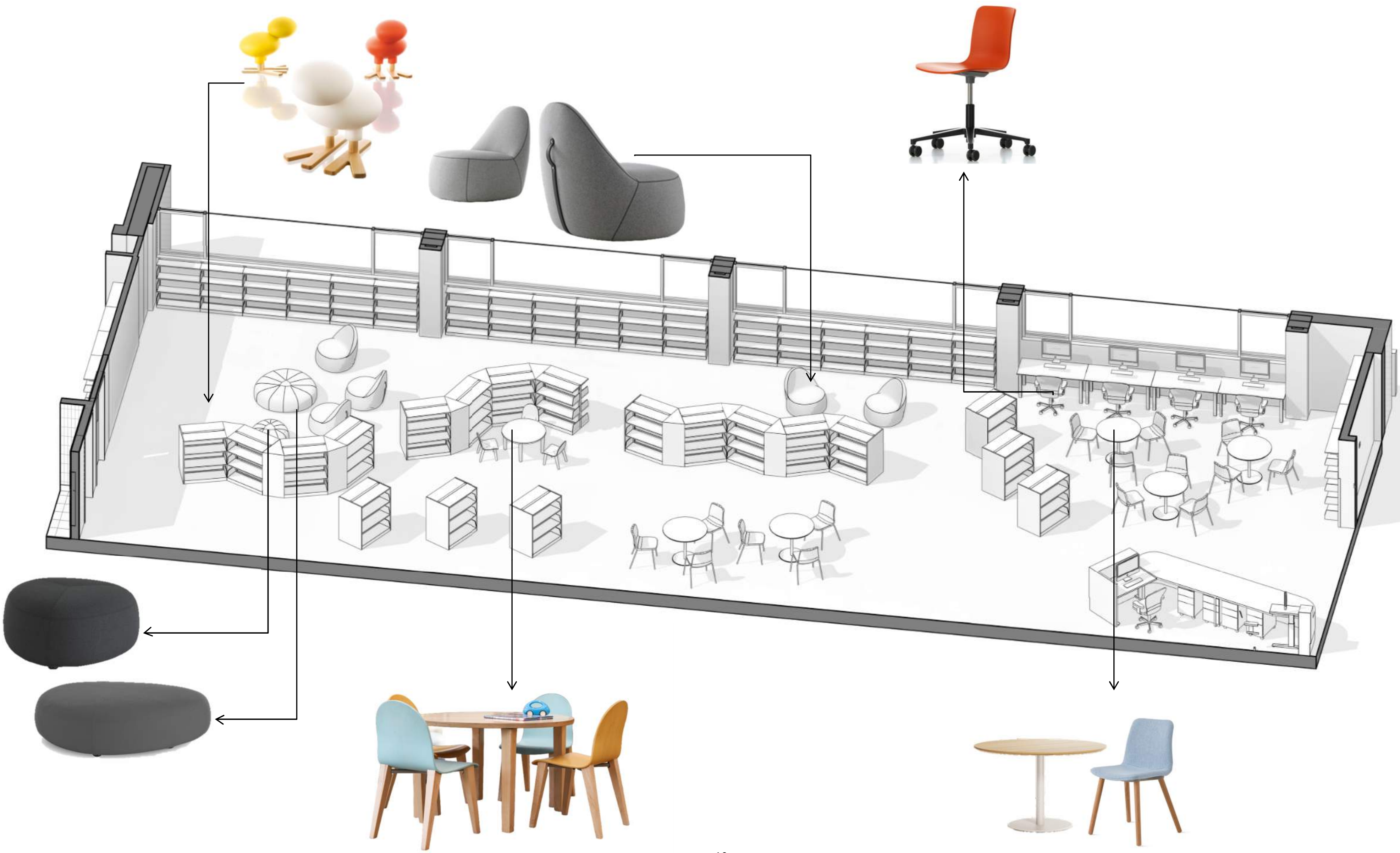
Ground Floor | Furniture & Workstations



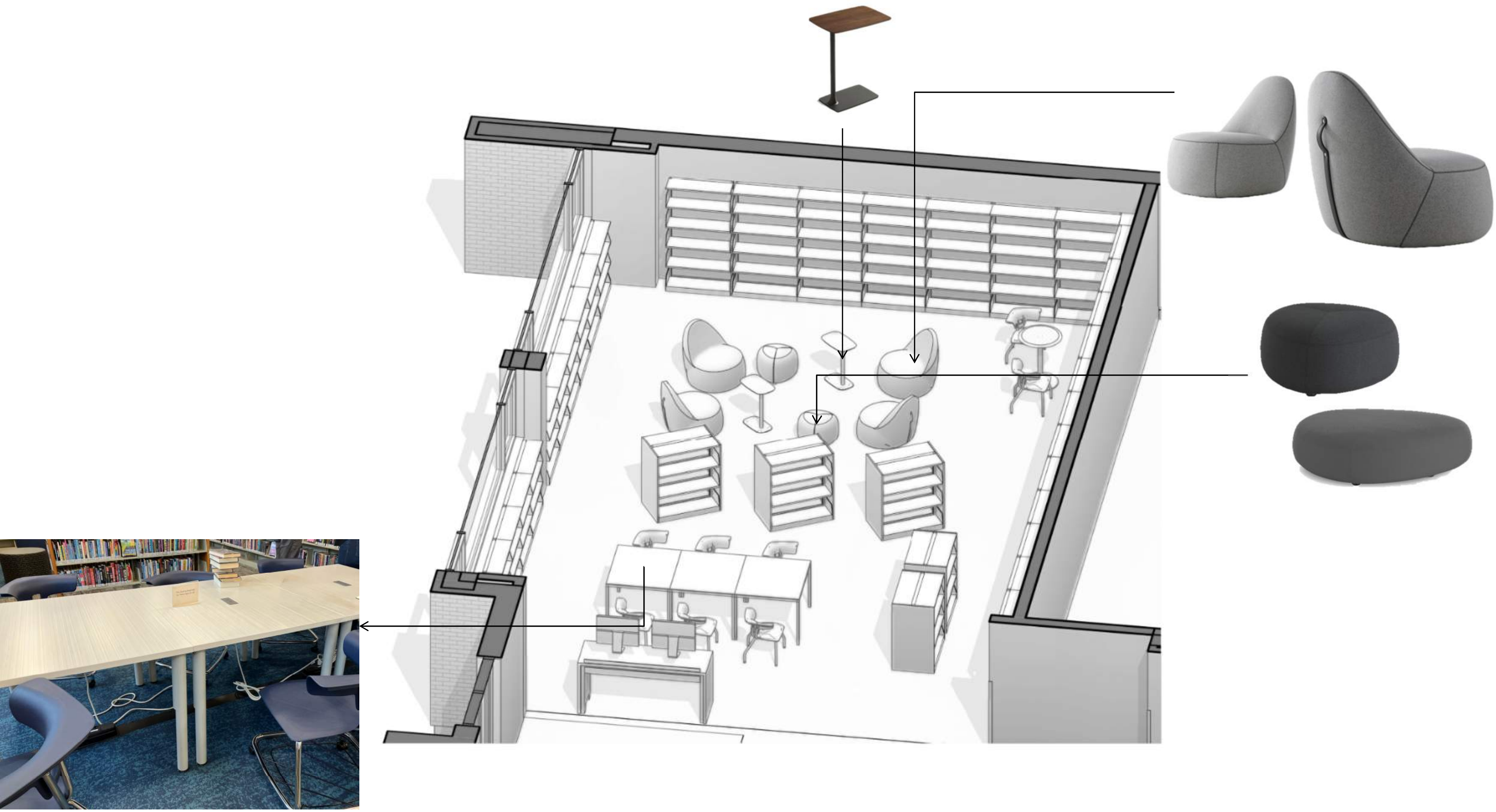
Ground Floor Plan

Children's Library

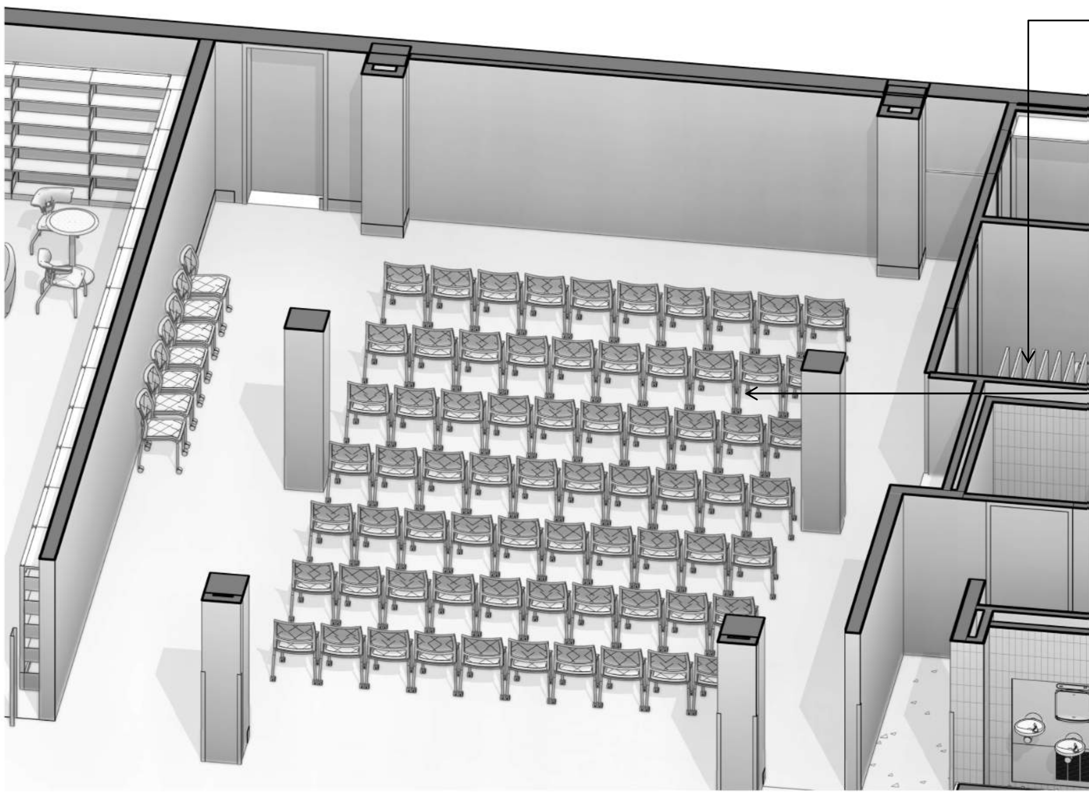




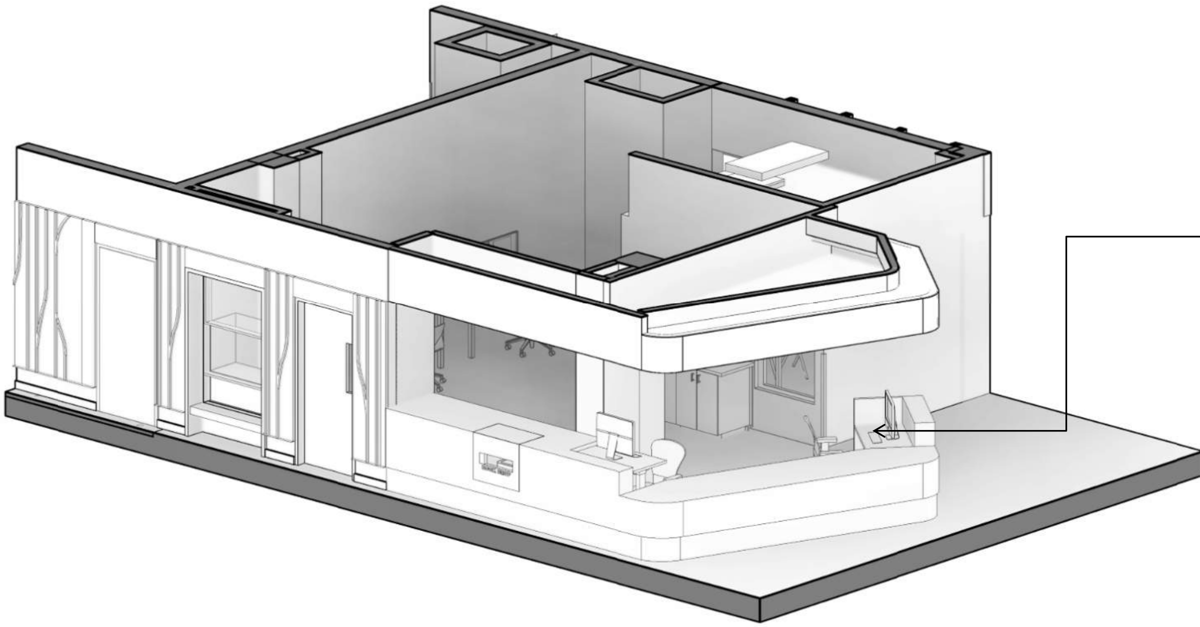
Teens



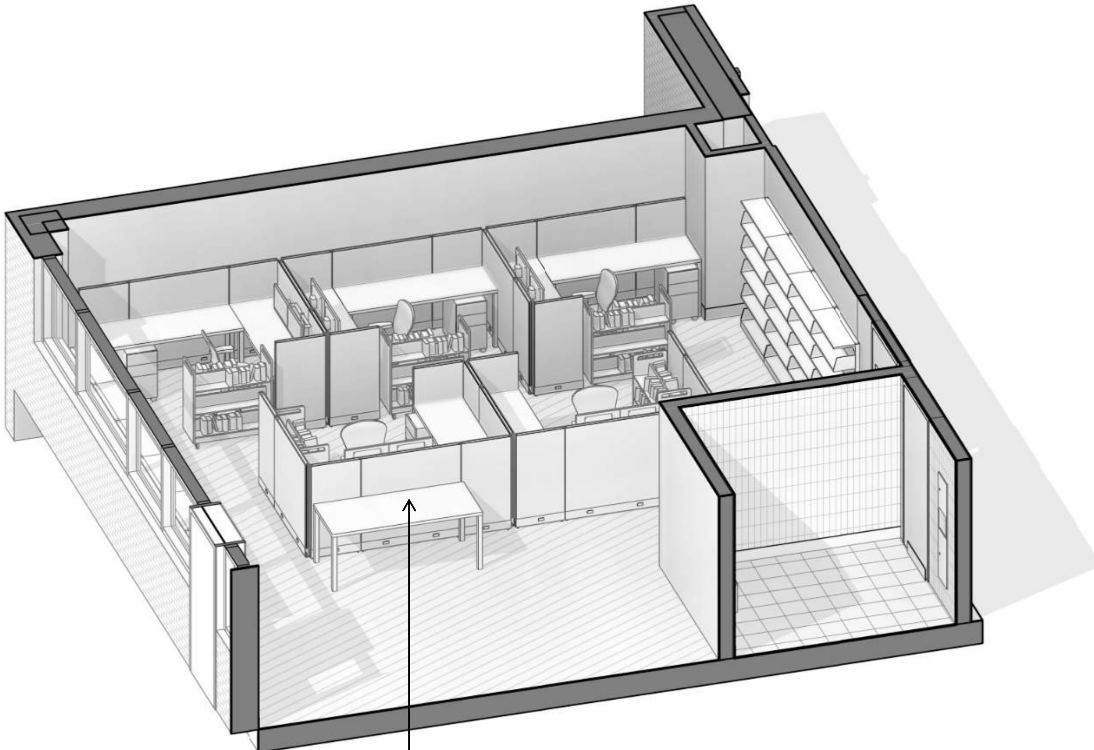
Multipurpose Room



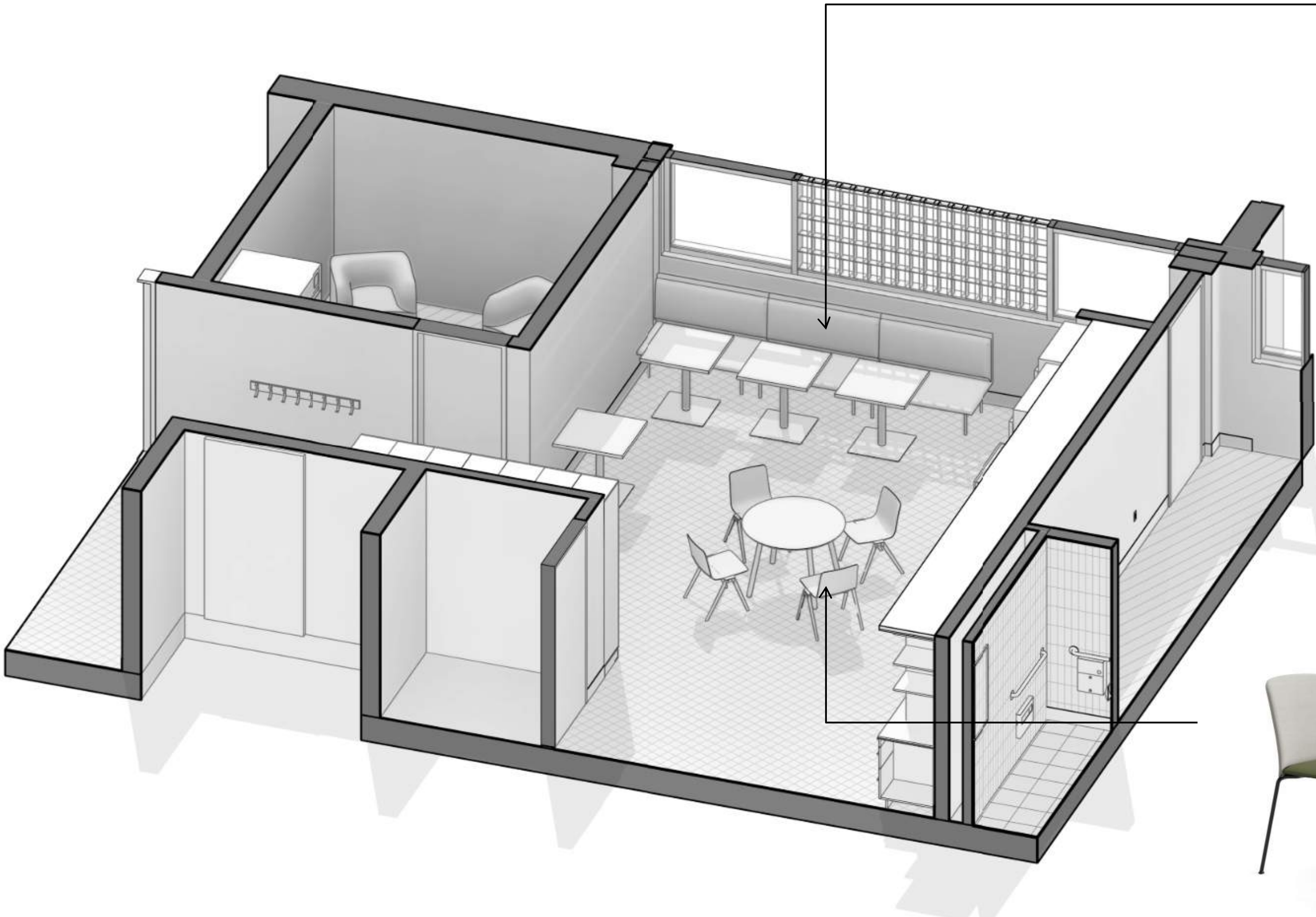
Children’s Service Point



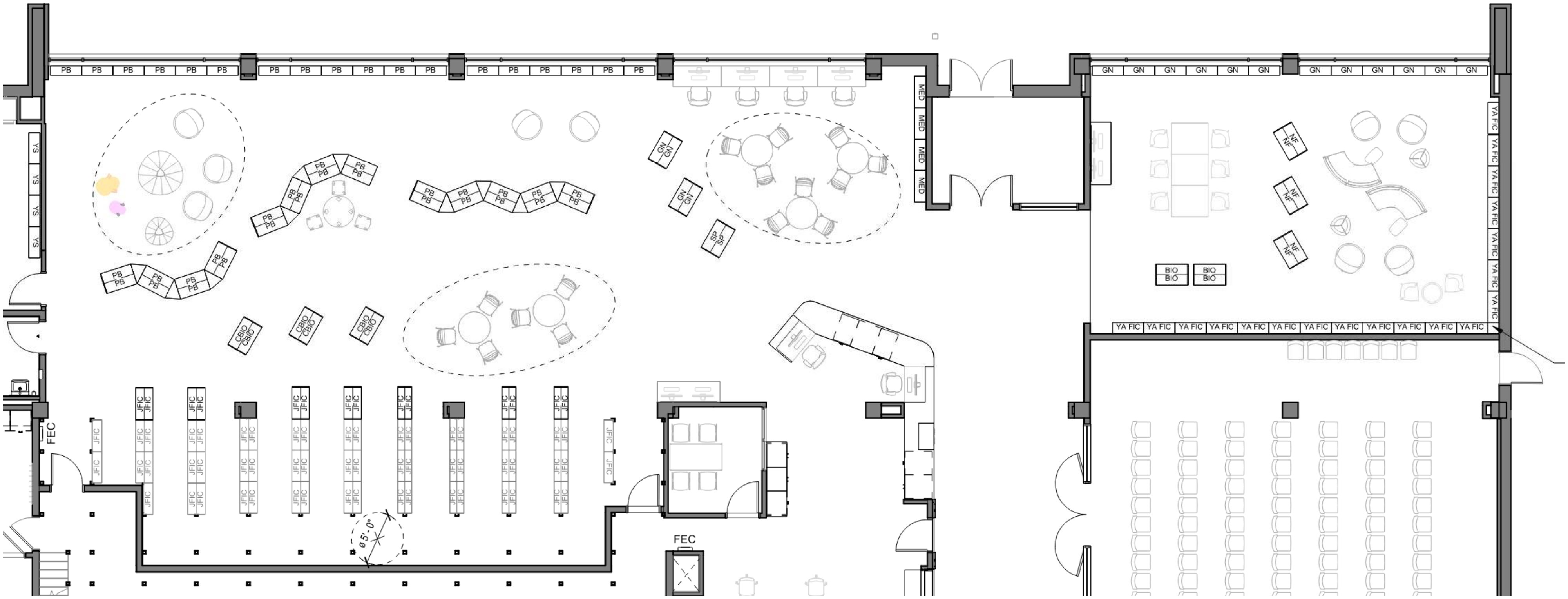
Youth Services



Staff Breakroom

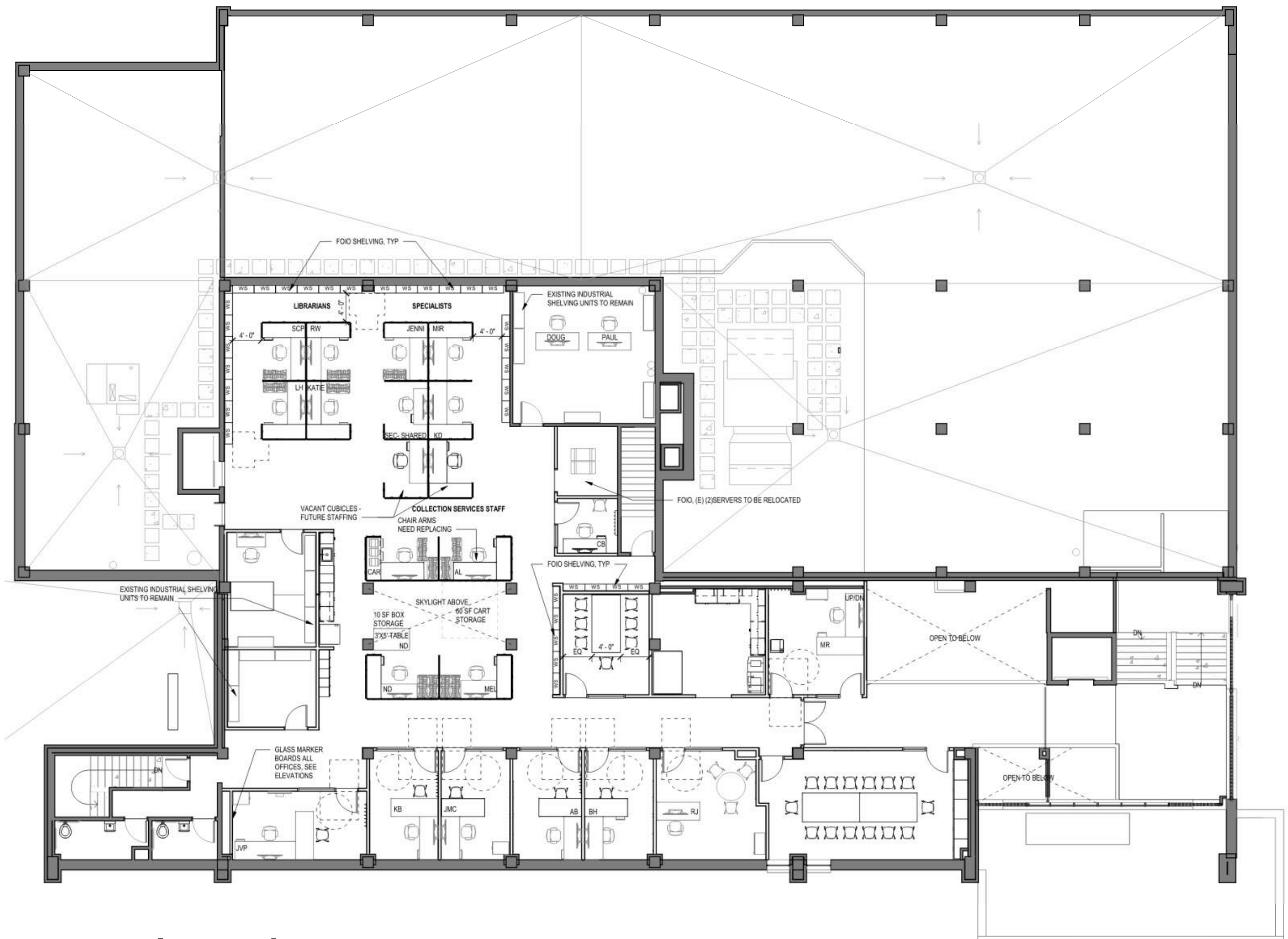


Ground Floor | Shelving



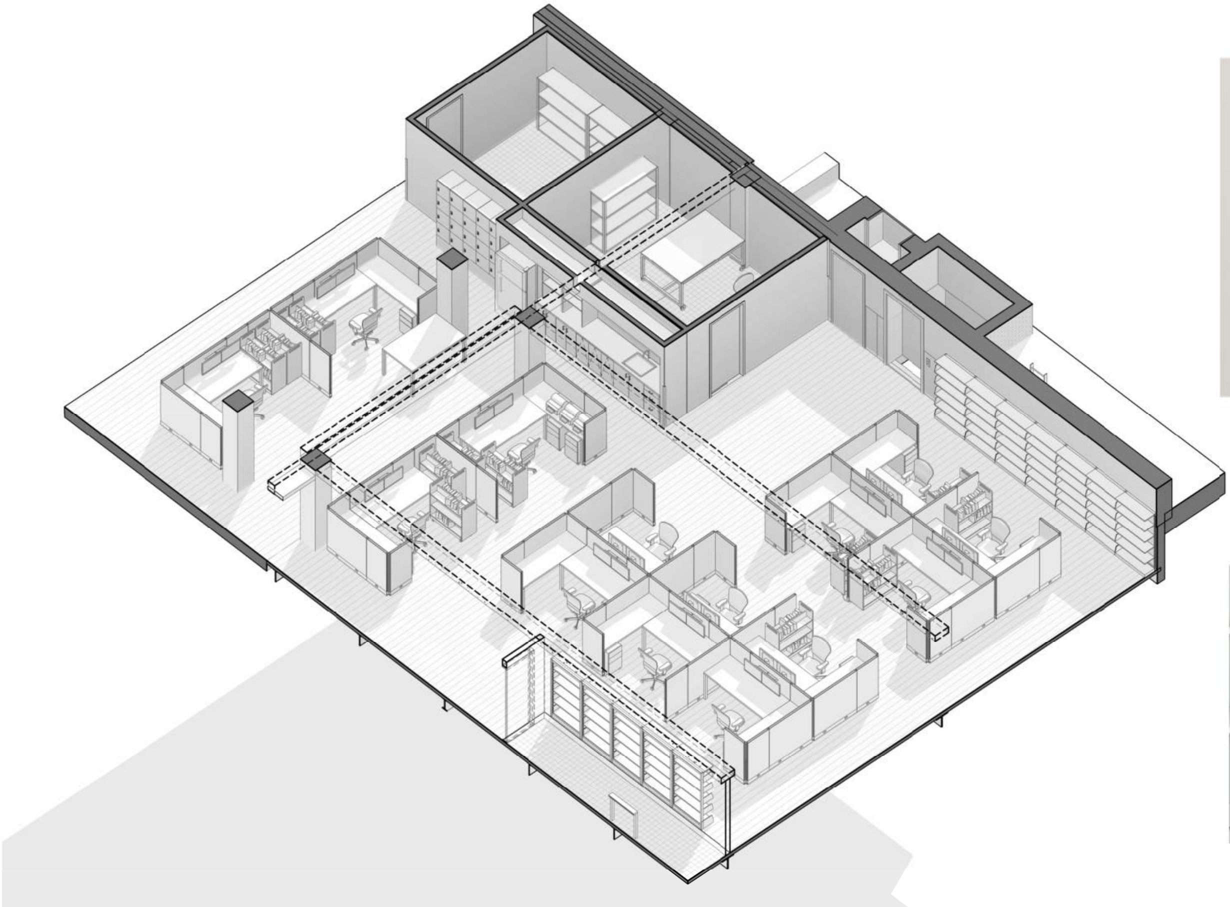
GROUND FLOOR SHELVING COLLECTION SCHEDULE					
		COLLECTION TYPE			
TYPE MARK	MFR	SIDE 1	SIDE 2	COUNT	COMMENTS
D361142-3S	ESTEY	BIO	BIO	2	Casters
D361142-3S	ESTEY	CBIO	CBIO	3	Casters
D361142-3S	ESTEY	GN	GN	2	Casters
D361142-3S	ESTEY	NF	NF	3	Casters
D361142-3S	ESTEY	PB	PB	13	Casters
D361142-3S	ESTEY	SP	SP	1	Casters
S360942-3S	ESTEY	GN		12	Casters
S360942-3S	ESTEY	PB		18	
S360942-3S	ESTEY	YS		6	
S361166-5S	ESTEY	MED		4	
S361166-5S	ESTEY	YA FIC		19	
S361166-5S	ESTEY	YS		4	
(E)D36766-5S	EXISTING METAL	JFIC	JFIC	15	
(E)D36966-5S	EXISTING METAL	JFIC	JFIC	18	
(E)S36966-5S	EXISTING METAL	JFIC		5	
				125	

Level 2 | Furniture & Workstations


FOIO SHELVING, TYP
LIBRARIANS
SPECIALISTS
EXISTING INDUSTRIAL SHELVING UNITS TO REMAIN
SCP
RW
JENNI
MIR
DOUG
PAUL
LH
KATIE
SEC- SHARED
KD
FOIO, (E) (2)SERVERS TO BE RELOCATED
VACANT CUBICLES - FUTURE STAFFING
COLLECTION SERVICES STAFF
CHAIR ARMS NEED REPLACING
CB
CAR
AL
FOIO SHELVING, TYP
EXISTING INDUSTRIAL SHELVING UNITS TO REMAIN
SKYLIGHT ABOVE
10 SF BOX STORAGE
60 SF CART STORAGE
3'X5' TABLE
ND
EQ
4' - 0"
EQ
MR
UP/DN
OPEN TO BELOW
DN
ND
MEL
GLASS MARKER BOARDS ALL OFFICES, SEE ELEVATIONS
KB
JMC
AB
BH
RJ
JVP
OPEN TO BELOW

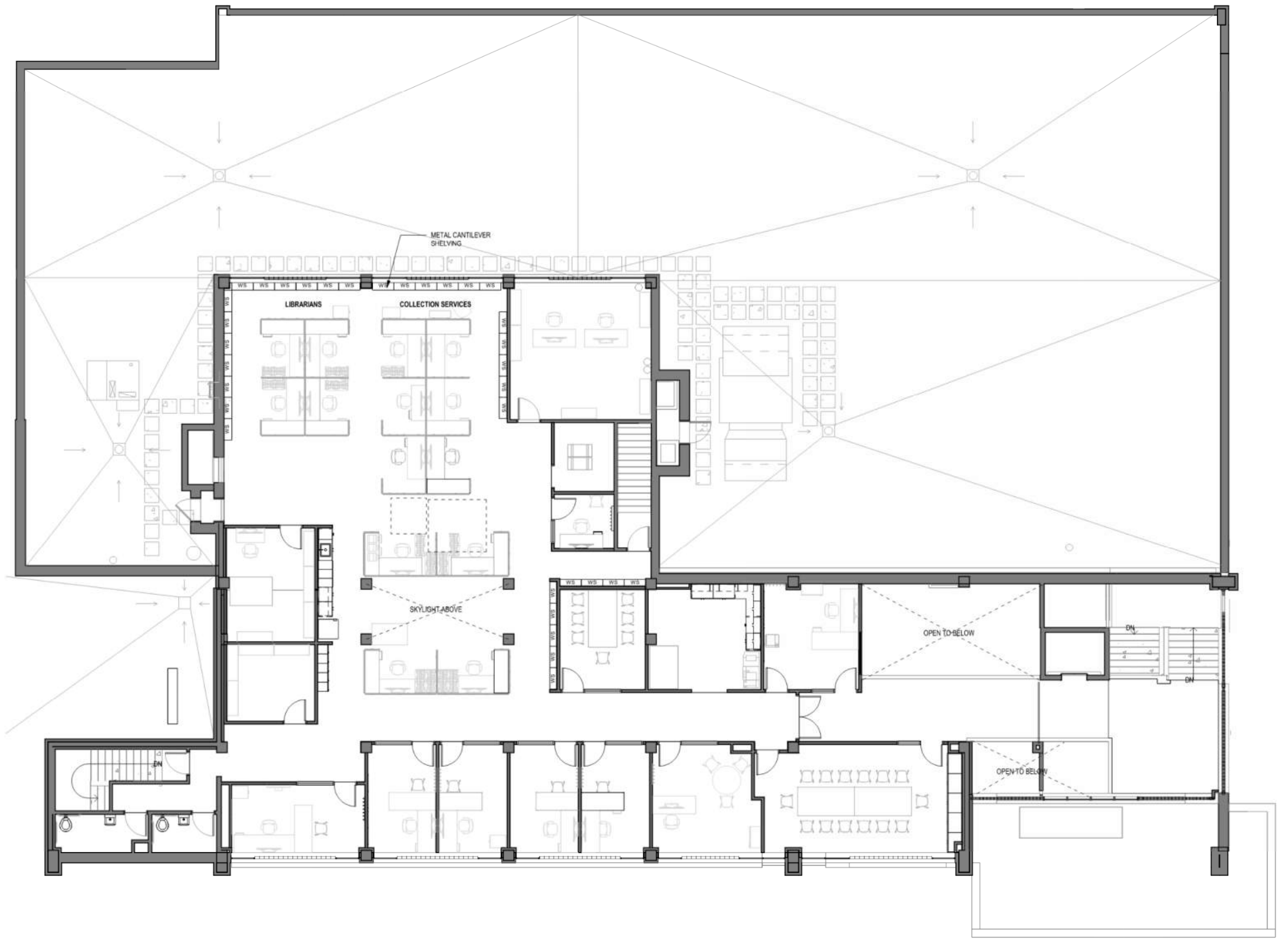
Level 2 Plan

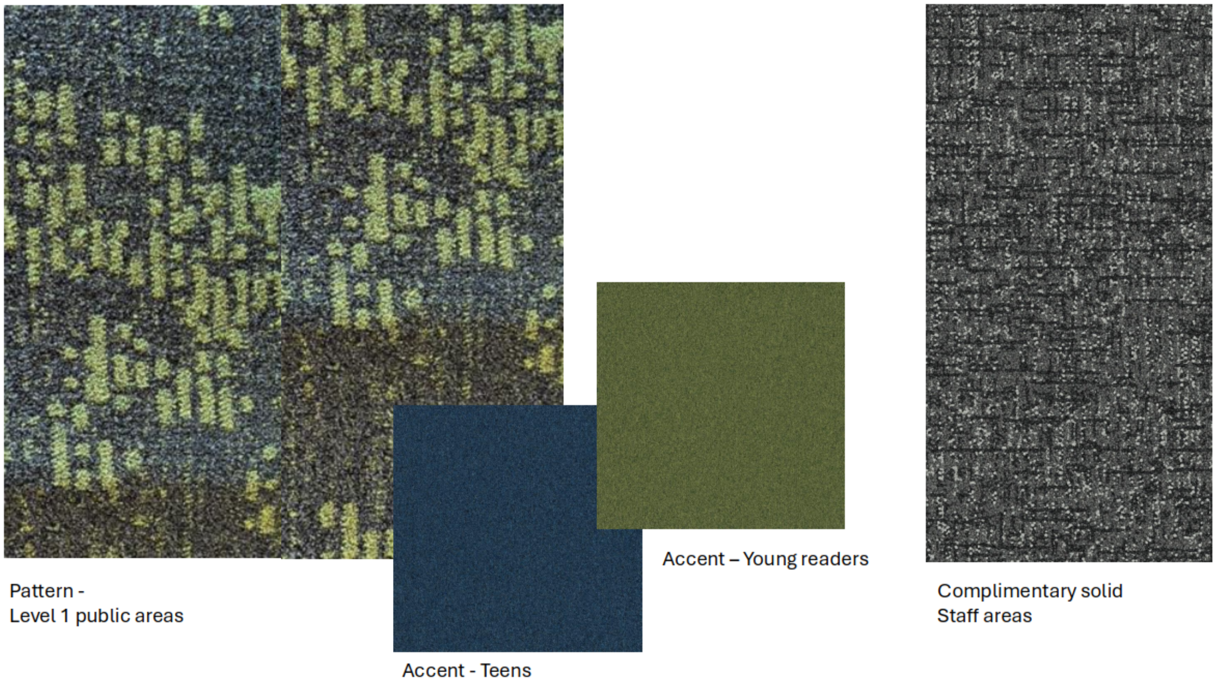
Open Plan Workspace

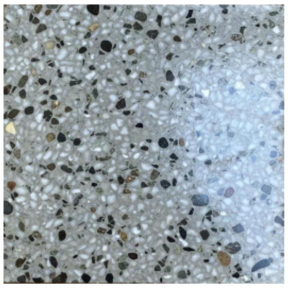


Level 2 Overall

Level 2 | Shelving




Pattern -
Level 1 public areas
Accent - Teens
Accent – Young readers
Complimentary solid
Staff areas

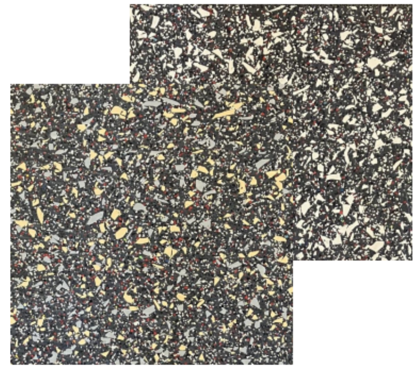


Poured Terrazzo

- 40-100 yr floor
- Easy cleaning
- Requires periodic sealing – 3-5 yrs
- Smooth / Monolithic
- Hard surface amplifies sound
- $$$$ Highest Cost

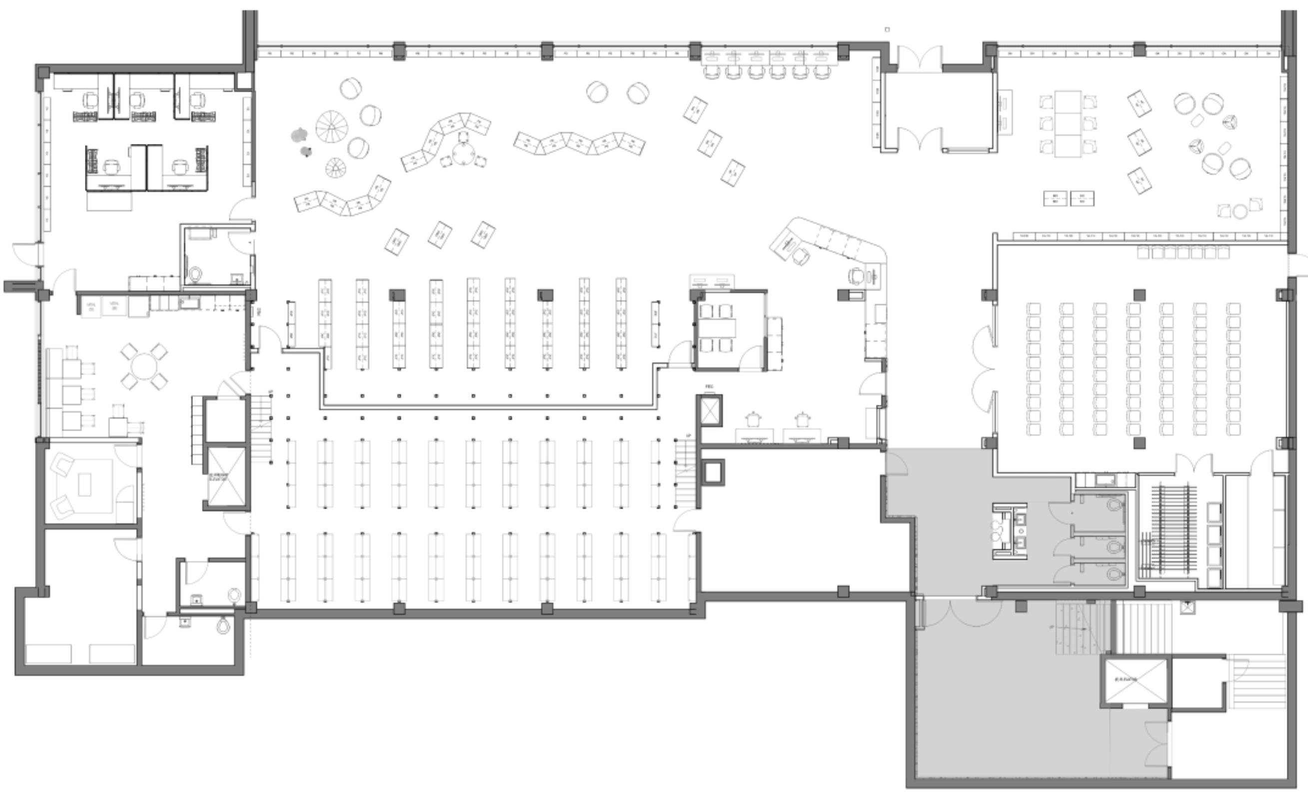
Porcelain tile – 24" x 24"

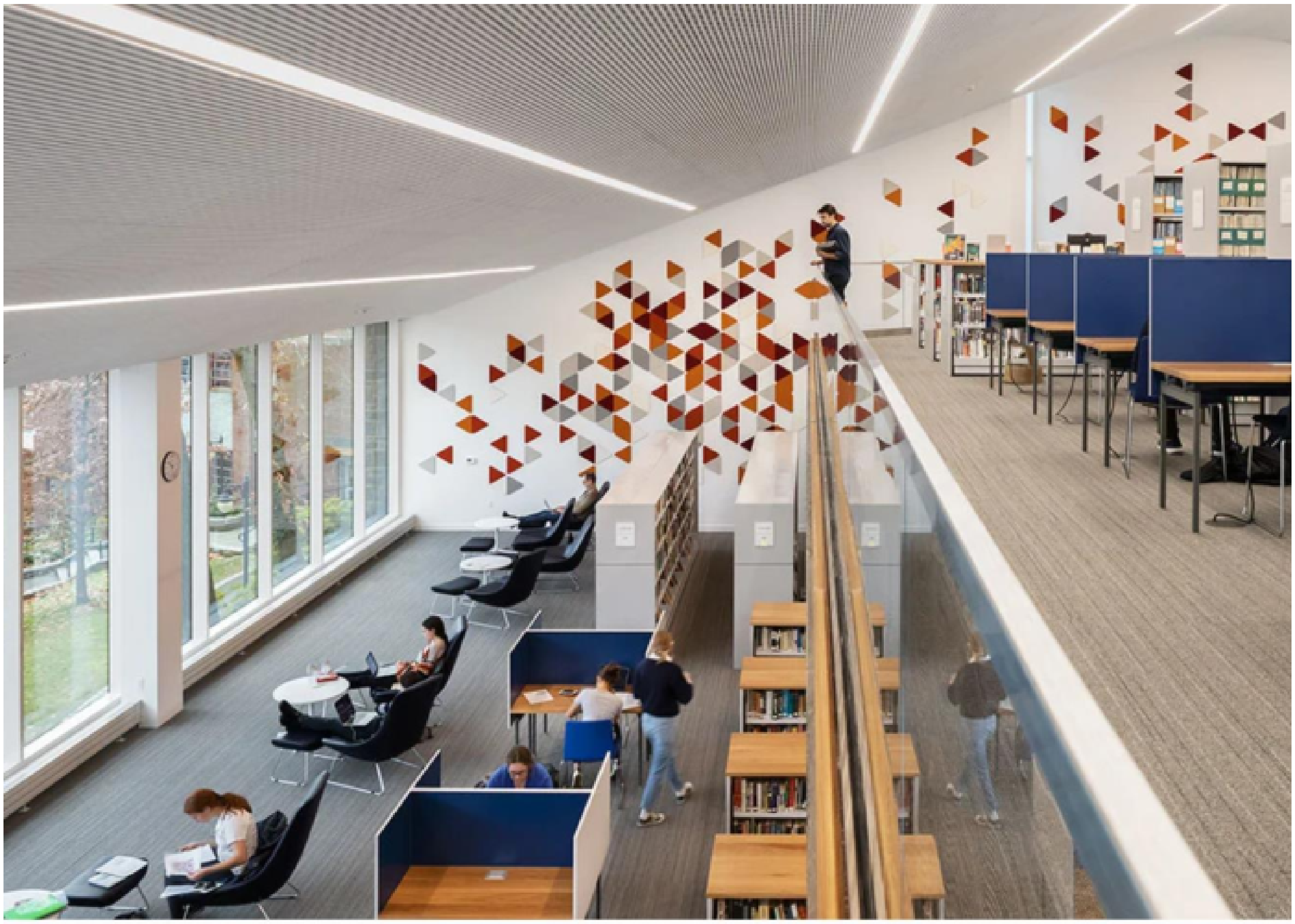
- 20-50 yr floor
- Resists stains, easy to clean
- Grout traps dirt and stains
- Grout lines
- Hard surface amplifies sound
- $$$ Midrange Cost



Rubber Flooring – 48" x 48"

- 15-25 yr floor
- Handles heavy loads
- Periodic deep cleaning
- Smooth – flush joints
- Dampens impact sound
- Not suitable for restrooms
- $$ Most Affordable





Wall Feature Idea | Ground Floor Foyer West

GROUND FLOOR FOYER WEST

AFT - not final design

Bellingham Public Library

Performance & Activity Measures - June 2026

Holdings - Number of materials in the library's collection

Holding Type	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Physical copies added to the collection	1,707	1,150	9,916	7,421	**-25.2%**
Electronic copies purchased by BPL	100	61	707	448	**-36.6%**
Physical copies withdrawn from collection	-847	-299	-13,785	-17,015	**23.4%**
Total physical holdings	-	-	181,955	176,169	**-3.2%**
Total electronic holdings available to BPL	-	-	169,161	191,000	**12.9%**
Total Holdings (Physical and Electronic)	-	-	**351,116**	**367,169**	**4.6%**

Circulation - Number of items checked out or renewed; includes Interlibrary Loan

Physical Materials Circulation	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Central Library Adult	36,956	33,628	232,880	210,781	-9.5%
Central Library Youth	39,553	37,629	239,760	215,347	-10.2%
Sub-Total Central	**76,509**	**71,257**	**472,640**	**426,128**	**-9.8%**
Fairhaven Branch Adult	4,619	4,770	29,216	29,259	0.1%
Fairhaven Branch Youth	3,100	2,939	16,867	17,034	1.0%
Sub-Total Fairhaven	**7,719**	**7,709**	**46,083**	**46,293**	**0.5%**
Barkley Branch Adult	4,201	5,134	27,057	28,204	4.2%
Barkley Branch Youth	4,971	4,449	29,242	28,714	-1.8%
Sub-Total Barkley	**9,172**	**9,583**	**56,299**	**56,918**	**1.1%**
Bellis Fair Branch Adult	1,757	1,610	8,135	8,308	2.1%
Bellis Fair Branch Youth	1,294	1,426	11,439	10,356	-9.5%
Sub-Total Bellis Fair	**3,051**	**3,036**	**19,574**	**18,664**	**-4.6%**
Bellingham Technical College Adult	25	38	250	219	-12.4%
Bellingham Technical College Youth	2	4	38	7	-81.6%
Sub-Total BTC	**27**	**42**	**288**	**226**	**-21.5%**
Whatcom Community College Adult	216	116	1,156	806	-30.3%
Whatcom Community College Youth	51	12	173	73	-57.8%
Sub-Total WCC	**267**	**128**	**1,329**	**879**	**-33.9%**
Western Washington University Adult	232	168	1,730	1,460	-15.6%
Western Washington University Youth	54	76	402	697	73.4%
Sub-Total WWU	**286**	**244**	**2,132**	**2,157**	**1.2%**
Total Physical Circulation	**97,031**	**91,999**	**598,345**	**551,265**	**-7.9%**

Digital Materials Circulation	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Kanopy - Video Streaming	1,915	1,881	12,162	11,867	**-2.4%**
WA Anytime Library Overdrive - eBooks and eAudiobooks	39,526	39,714	244,800	247,316	**1.0%**
Overdrive- eMagazines	7,867	9,317	46,494	55,191	**18.7%**
Total Online Circulation	**49,308**	**50,912**	**303,456**	**314,374**	**3.6%**
Total Digital and Physical Circulation	**146,339**	**142,911**	**901,801**	**865,639**	**-4.0%**

Holds Activity	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Items placed on hold shelf	48,237	68,081	305,838	391,846	**28.1%**

Services

Visitors (Door Counts)	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Central Library	30,674	26,743	196,645	169,578	-13.8%
Fairhaven Branch	2,789	3,485	19,582	21,177	8.1%
Barkley Branch	2,766	2,949	15,586	16,160	3.7%
Bellis Fair Branch	1,679	1,734	11,947	11,862	-0.7%
Total Persons Visiting	**37,908**	**34,911**	**243,760**	**218,777**	**-10.2%**

New Borrowers Registered	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Central Library	537	520	3,472	3,392	-2.3%
Fairhaven Branch	33	32	209	188	-10.0%
Barkley Branch	31	33	163	142	-12.9%
Bellis Fair Branch	36	28	248	234	-5.6%
Total New Borrowers Registered	**637**	**613**	**4,092**	**3,956**	**-3.3%**

Programs - Library sponsored or co-sponsored	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Programs	80	64	664	656	-1.2%
Attendees	4,019	3,738	16,307	20,952	28.5%

Electronic Resources

Website Visits	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Website Visits - Number of visits to www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org	40,905	42,902	252,075	269,796	7.0%
Bibliocommons Visits - Number of visits to online catalog	24,205	26,633	153,322	166,903	8.9%
Total Website Visits	**65,110**	**69,535**	**405,397**	**436,699**	**7.7%**

Computer Usage - Number of sessions	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Central Library - Adult & Teen(30 terminals)	3,110	2,873	20,549	17,812	-13.3%
Central Library - Children (3 terminals)	100	116	529	497	-6.0%
Fairhaven Branch (7 terminals)	181	247	1,345	1,712	27.3%
Barkley Branch (4 terminals)	137	128	782	823	5.2%
Bellis Fair Branch (4 terminals)	133	132	788	872	10.7%
Total Computer Usage	**3,661**	**3,496**	**23,993**	**21,716**	**-9.5%**

Community Partnerships

Friends of BPL	Jun-25	Jun-26	YTD 2025	YTD 2026	YTD % Change
Volunteer Hours	305	367	2,869	3,060	6.7%

Bellingham Public Library

Board Claims, June 2026

LIST OF CLAIMS AGAINST THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES AND THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM TO BE CONSIDERED AND APPROVED AT THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF JULY 21, 2026, IN ACCORDANCE WITH RCW 27.12.210 AND 27.12.240.

General Fund Claims

Interfund Claims

Description	Vendor	Amount
Banking and Credit Card Fees	City of Bellingham Interfund	21.08
Computer replacement allocation	City of Bellingham Interfund	20,125.58
Facilities allocation (Central)	City of Bellingham Interfund	12,906.82
Facilities allocation (Fairhaven)	City of Bellingham Interfund	7,060.40
Fleet Rent Allocation and Services	City of Bellingham Interfund	1,770.00
Radio Communications Allocation	City of Bellingham Interfund	609.41
Risk Management	City of Bellingham Interfund	9,740.95
Technology Replacement Allocation	City of Bellingham Interfund	8,954.51
Total Interfund Claims		**$61,188.75**

Physical and Digital Collection Materials Claims

Description	Vendor	Amount
Books	Amazon	535.22
High School Year Books	Bellingham School District	150.00
Gale Database	Cengage	2,673.28
Books and preprocessing	Ingram	13,262.46
DVDs, CDs, Audiobooks, and Preprocessing	Midwest Tape	1,739.19
Ebooks and Eaudiobooks	Overdrive	3,471.89
Books	Playaway Products	2,303.85
Total Physical and Digital Collection Materials Claims		**$24,135.89**

Equipment, Supplies, and Services Claims

Description	Vendor	Amount
Barkley Janitorial	Action Cleaning Service	812.00
Supplies; Minor Equipment; First Aid	Amazon	488.15
Bellis Fair Branch lease	Bellis Fair Mall Territories	5,357.00
Pest management	BioBug	147.29
Natural gas service	Cascade Natural Gas	575.45
Digital Subscription	Cascadia Daily News	108.00
Water/Sewer/SSW service (Central)	City of Bellingham	2,312.41
Water/Sewer/SSW service (Fairhaven)	City of Bellingham	412.59
Barkley & Bellis Fair branch water/cooler rentals	Clearwater Systems	48.42
Copies	Copiers Northwest	32.77
Security Monitoring	Guardian Security	280.26
Copier leases and copies	Kelley Create	121.82

Hotspot Service	Mission Telecom	924.00
Bellis Fair Branch waste service	L&L Mall Facilities	112.82
Fuel	Nelson-Reisner	351.45
Paper and tissues	ODP Business Solutions	174.94
Bellis Fair internet service	Pogozone Wireless	367.49
Postage	Quadient	1,284.66
Bellis Fair Janitorial	Sealx	1,275.30
Digital subscription	Seattle Times	19.96
CPR Training	Shawn Ritchey	221.58
SMTP Subscription	SMTP2GO	100.00
Barkley Branch Lease	Talbot Services	533.33
Viewscan	Technology Unlimited	340.39
Borrower notices	Unique Management	3,347.60
Hotspot Service	Verizon Wireless	1,600.40
Total Equipment, Supplies, and Services Claims		**$21,350.08**
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CLAIMS		**$106,674.72**

Gift Fund Claims

Description	Vendor	Amount
Books, Supplies	Amazon.com	491.57
Bellis Fair temp space lease	Bellis Fair Mall Territories	1,500.00
Community outreach supplies	B&H Photo	108.01
Community outreach supplies	Canva	314.83
Summer Reading Signs	Capitol City Press	292.72
Books	Center Point Large Print Books	99.48
Event deposit	Hotel Bellwether	250.00
Books	Ingram	1,654.08
Summer Reading Prize Reimbursement	Katie Bray	59.93
Audiobooks	Midwest Tape	792.95
Family program supplies	Oriental Trading Co.	49.07
EAudiobooks	Overdrive	441.50
TOTAL GIFT FUND CLAIMS		**$6,054.14**

Total General Fund & Gift Fund claims	**112,728.86**

Bellingham Public Library

Budget to Actual, June 2026

50% YTD

GENERAL FUND BUDGET TO ACTUAL				
GENERAL FUND REVENUES				
Description	**YTD Actuals**	**Budget**	**Remaining**	**% Complete**
Grants	3,163	0		
Print and Copy Fees	10,668	15,000	4,332	71%
Lost, Damage & Non-resident Borrower Fees	4,942	11,100	6,158	45%
Miscellaneous Revenues	654	0	(654)	
Total General Fund Revenues	**19,427**	**26,100**	**6,673**	**74%**
GENERAL FUND EXPENSES				
Description	**YTD Actuals**	**Budget**	**Remaining**	**% Complete**
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	2,573,941	5,115,262	2,541,322	50%
Interfund	872,847	2,103,588	1,230,741	41%
Physical and Digital Collection Materials	342,192	613,465	271,273	56%
Equipment, Supplies, and Services	261,421	594,164	332,743	44%
Total General Fund Expenses	**4,050,401**	**8,426,479**	**4,376,079**	**48%**

GIFT FUND BUDGET TO ACTUAL				
GIFT FUND REVENUES				
Description	**YTD Actuals**	**Budget**	**Remaining**	**% Complete**
Donations	101,515	400,000	298,485	25%
Total Gift Fund Revenues	**101,515**	**400,000**	**298,485**	**25%**
GIFT FUND EXPENSES				
Description	**YTD Actuals**	**Budget**	**Remaining**	**% Complete**
Gift Fund Expenses	41,645	400,000	358,355	10%
Total Gift Fund Expenses	**41,645**	**400,000**	**358,355**	**10%**

Bellingham Public Library

DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR July 21, 2026

This month's report beautifully captures how our library collects and creates community stories. We saw this in action over the past month, from the giant bubbles drawing families to bilingual storytimes at Cordata Park to the inspiring impact of our snail-mail typewriting workshops. Meanwhile, the Capital Campaign committee successfully focused its June event on listening to personal library histories - grounding us in why our Phase 2 renovation is so vital - while our summer reading business partners shared their own inspiring library stories. Powering these vibrant community connections is a network of dedicated logistical support; whether we are rolling out major process improvements in Operations, packing outreach collections for local care facilities, or finalizing architectural layouts with Miller Hull, our behind-the-scenes work ensures these stories have a place to thrive. (Rebecca Judd, Library Director)

WELCOME & INCLUDE

Power of connection: Cuentos al Parque/Stories at the Park: I asked Ali Kubeny, Children's Services Librarian, to share an impact story of her summertime bilingual storytimes. She says, "I had an absolute blast sharing stories, songs, and summer reading cards in Spanish and English with children and families at Cordata Park on the sunny afternoon of June 11th. Cuentos al parque/Stories at the Park truly is a special program; some faithful attendees come to the park intentionally for the storytime, but many families who are simply enjoying the playground follow the giant bubbles and discvoer the library has come to meet them exactly where they are. Programs like this are vital for building strong relationships with our patrons and demonstrating the library's commitment to connecting our community. When children and families have meaningful, uplifting experiences at storytimes, it builds their trust in the library and often leads to their increased usage of additional library services." (Bethany Hoglund, Deputy Library Director)

ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY

One Year of Modified Outreach Services: This month marks the completion of the first year of Outreach Services to assisted living and nursing facilities using a rotating collection model. This model allows us to continue providing access to Library materials despite significant reductions in capacity and also gives new life to some underutilized items. It has had a successful start. The eight facilities who signed up for this new service model, Alderwood Park, Avalon, Chuckanut Ridge, Mount Baker Care Center, North Cascades Health and Rehabilitation, Orchard Park, Summit Place, and Woodway Inn, all continue to receive a quarterly rotating collections. We have delivered over 2000 items to the residents of these facilities including Large Type books, Audiobooks, and DVDs in a variety of genres. Other facilities and HUD properties have shown an interest in this type of service. While we don't currently have capacity to meet that demand, we remain hopeful that a similar model could be an efficient and effective way to increase Library access when the funding allows. (Katrina Buckman, Head of Public Services)

Analytics: Each month we receive performance snapshots from Google Business Profile for each of our four locations, based on how patrons discover and interact with our business listing on Google Search and Maps. Here is a glimpse at the one-month data for June 2026.

- Central Library: 15,817 people viewed profile. 1,607 asked for directions. 996 website visits from profile. 261 phone calls from profile.
- Fairhaven Branch: 8,786 people viewed profile. 184 asked for directions. 178 website visits from profile. 31 phone calls from profile.
- Barkley Branch: 8,203 people viewed profile. 130 asked for directions. 93 website visits from profile. 29 phone calls from profile.
- Bellis Fair Branch: 6,753 people viewed profile. 92 asked for directions. 70 website visits from profile. 21 phone calls from profile.

(Annette Bagley, Head of Community Relations)

READ & LEARN

Adult Programming: On Saturday, June 20, BPL hosted "The Art of Typing Snail Mail" at the Central Library Lecture Room. This was a mash-up of popular Skillshare programs "Typewriters 101" and "Correspondence Club." Patrons were very happy, enthusiastic, and grateful for this unique event. Several patrons asked that we repeat this program. Written comments collected via a feedback box included the following:

- "Enjoyed it very much especially the help getting started."
- "Best ever! Please do this again!!!"
- "10/10! Please do this again!!"
- Thanks Bham Library for all the ways you show up for the community."
- "This was such a lovely event. It was deeply inspiring and life giving. Thank you for all you do for the community. It really is life saving work"
- "Keep doing these! Doing Saturday 3pm is perfect! This + mending workshop are PRICELESS"

(Annette Bagley, Head of Community Relations)

INFORM & INVOLVE

Library Card Night at Bellingham Bells game June 25: Despite rainy weather, we had another tremendous turnout for our fourth annual event. The Bells provided free admission to 553 library card holders for the evening, and BPL staff handed out Summer Reading Activity Cards for all ages. Our promotions for the evening also did well. A fun reel featuring Bethany and Bernice had 10,744 views on Facebook and Instagram combined. (Annette Bagley, Head of Community Relations)

Capital Campaign Donor Engagement Event: The Capital Campaign Committee held its second engagement event on Tuesday, June 30 from 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Drawing on the experience from the first event, the committee revamped the program outline and focused on spending more time sharing and listening to stories. Those stories included personal stories from committee members and attendees about the impact the library has had on their lives, and the story of the Bellingham Public Library and

Phase 2 renovation itself. The stories were complimented with two experiences: attending a bilingual storytime led by Children's Librarian Ali Kubeny, and taking a tour of the lower level of the Central Library. We have two more events on the calendar: July 28 and August 25. (Bethany Hoglund, Deputy Library Director)

Thank you Summer Reading Prize Partners! Throughout June, July and August we are continuing to thank our local businesses who provided prize coupons for school age youth who turn in their Summer Reading Activity cards. We are showing our gratitude on social media and in our e-newsletter. Here are more quotes from the businesses about why they support summer reading:

- "As parents ourselves, we feel that the skills of reading and writing are still very important to help with life lessons and developing imagination and improving communication. Participating in programs like this that provide ways to keep kids excited about these skills, in our modern age, that puts so much emphasis on technology and social media is one way we can help." – David and Chelsey Prince, owners, Mammoth Mini Golf

- "At the Pickford, we believe great stories inspire, change and move us in unexpected ways. Summer Reading reminds kids that curiosity is worth chasing, and we're proud to cheer them on." - Pickford Film Center

- "Throughout our journey, the unwavering support from our customers and neighbors have played a pivotal role in our growth and success. In recognition and gratitude for this invaluable support, we dedicate ourselves to contributing positively to the community that has embraced us. Our donations and involvement are driven by this fundamental belief - that by giving back, we not only express our appreciation but also help to foster a stronger, healthier, and more vibrant community for everyone! " - Maria Williams, Playdate BLI

- "The youth in our community support the roots of all that surround us. Let's all celebrate that kind of growth!" - Travis Norwick, Robek's

(Annette Bagley, Head of Community Relations)

THRIVE & GROW

Process improvements in Operations: Alison Kuiken, Operations Supervisor, rolled out a significant change to how we check in and move materials between library locations in February 2026. She recognized that these procedures had not been seriously reviewed in more than a decade, likely because any changes would impact operations at both WCLS and BPL. After consultation with WCLS and our operations staff, Alison designed and implemented updated procedures that make better use of our materials sorter, reducing the need for location flags in individual items, and limiting the number of times library materials need to be touched by our staff. We have been pleased with the results so far:

- Smaller branches save time – no longer sorting and crating materials by location manually, allowing the sorter downtown to do that for us.
- Increased efficiency at Central – a significant time savings created by no longer using location flags in individual materials (and created a system that works for WCLS operations as they do not have an automated sorter).

- Simplified deliveries for our drivers – as less time and effort is spent rearranging crates into location piles between stops and sorting the piles again at Central.

While the volume of materials passing through our system remains consistent, delivery staff report that they have shaved up to an hour off their daily delivery run, at Central we are usually able to complete processing of daily incoming materials even when volume is heavy, and the number of items delayed due to location errors has decreased because the sorter "double-checks" the destination for each item before it is crated for transport. (Jen Vander Ploeg, Head of Operations)

Renovation updates: The jury reviewed artist profiles that were on the Arts Commission roster and met to discuss. An artist has not yet been selected, and we discussed next steps in the 1% for Arts process. We recently received the 90% complete Construction Documents and are in the process of reviewing them before they are finalized. Miller Hull sent the 90% documents to the estimator who is working on the next cost estimate, which we expect to see in early August. The intent is to have a bid package ready to go out in the latter part of August. Design work continues for the furniture and fixtures that will go into the space. The staff renovation committee has been working to identify all the shared spaces in the building so that we can begin projects to review all the "stuff" in these spaces, dispose of things that are no longer needed and hopefully reduce the amount of packing we need to do later this year. Lots of fun work ahead! (Jen Vander Ploeg, Head of Operations)

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Judd

Library

FY2027 3% Budget exercise, representing $192,000 in reductions
$60,000 in interfund reductions not included

1. **Print Books, eBooks, and other Library materials: -$145,000.** This budget reduction does not represent a sustainable funding level for the library. It jeopardizes our ability to deliver the most basic library collection to the Bellingham community and threatens our reciprocal service obligations to the Whatcom County Library System. With these reductions, our 2027 budgeted funding for materials expenditure per capita, adopted by reference into the City's 2025 Comprehensive Plan, would decrease to $4.73: well below the lowest service level of $5.96 and less than half of what is needed for the high service level of $11.93.

   What these cuts represent:

   - Longer wait times: Community members will wait weeks or months longer for popular print materials, eBooks, and eAudiobooks.
   - Fewer resources: Community members will have fewer new titles in all formats, as well as fewer database offerings and digital resources.
   - Reduced support for youth literacy and equity: Fewer children's materials directly compromises early learning collections, disproportionately restricting access for low-income families who rely on the library as their primary source for school readiness.
   - Unbalanced County partnership: Bellingham residents will borrow far more than our library contributes, straining our reciprocal agreement with Whatcom County Library System.
2. **Hours:** Evening hours and Sunday hours were eliminated in 2025 and 2026. No additional reductions to open hours are recommended for 2027.
3. **Supplies, Equipment, Other: -$47,000.** Represents reductions in line items across the library's non-materials operating budget. This reduces our ability to manage unexpected expenses, as well as inflationary growth of supplies, equipment, and service contracts. It significantly reduces (by $16,500 or 60%) our training and professional development budget for library staff.

Library Assistant vacancies: (Recommend to fill) Budget reductions in 2025 and 2026 have reduced the Library Assistant team by 60 hours/ week. The library currently has 2 vacant non-benefited 19-hour positions (~$21,000 each) that are critical for our operations next year during the Central Library renovation. Recommend to fill these positions in September 2026.

Bellingham Public Library Level of Service Summary: July 2026

Proposal: *Adjust Staff Total FTE to reflect revised Open Hours per Week levels of service adopted May 2026*

2018 Staff Total FTE	Low: 50 FTE	Medium: 58 FTE	High: 64 FTE
2026 Staff Total FTE (proposed)	Low: 60 FTE	Medium: 74 FTE	High: 90 FTE

Standard	**Date of Adoption**	**Low/ Minimal 1**	**Medium/ Operational 2**	**High/ Optimal 3**
Library Facilities-- Square ft/capita	01/19/2016, Renewed 9/2022	0.6	0.8	1.0
Open hours per week-- Total number per location	06/21/2016 Revised 5/2026	45	56	67
Access hours per location:	06/21/2016 Revised 5/2026	Evening after 6 pm: 2 hours/week	Evening after 6 pm: 4 hours/week	Evening after 6 pm: 6 hours/week
		Weekend: 8 hours	Weekend: 12 hours	Weekend: 16 hours
		Weekday before 6 pm: 7 hours/day	Weekday before 6 pm: 8 hours/day	Weekday before 6 pm: 9 hours/day
Library Materials-- Expenditures/capita (2026)	03/21/2017, Revised 8/2024	$5.87	$8.81	$11.74
Library Staff Total FTE	03/13/2018 Revised x/2026	60	74	90

Note: the figures for each standard represent the minimum for each level of service. For instance, the Medium standard for Open hours per week / per location is 56-66.99 hours. Similarly, the Low standard for Library Staff Total FTE is 60-73.99 FTE

Background

Established 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 the Central Library and for the library branches
- Library materials – expenditures per capita
- Library staffing in 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 basic 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 sustainability 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 November 13, 2017, BERK presented findings from the report to the Bellingham City Council. At that meeting the City Council voted unanimously on the motion "…to direct the Administration to give recommendations to the Library Board of Trustees to move forward to Goal 2 *{i.e., medium/operational}* or 3 *{i.e., high/optimal}* as a priority."

Revisions to the Standards:

From 2022 to 2026 the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees worked with library management to review and revise the four established Level of Service (LOS) standards to reflect changes in community needs and, in the case of the Materials standard, a mechanism to adjust for inflation. A summary of changes is provided below:

- 2022: Library facilities – square footage per capita. 2016 standard was renewed without change as part of the Facilities Master Plan.
- 2024: Library materials – expenditures per capita. Levels of service revised to include multiplier for inflation, with guidance to update every 3 years. The next update will be completed in 2027 for the years 2028. 2029, 2030.
- 2026: Open hours per week for the Central Library and for the library branches. 2016 standard was changed to one systemwide standard with updated LOS goals and the addition of evening, weekend, and weekday access expectations. Updated LOS goals were informed by a nationwide review of level of service standards for open hours and community feedback received since 2016.
- 2026: Library staffing in FTE. 2018 standard was updated to reflect the revised Open hours levels of service.

Bellingham Public Library Service Level: Cost and Funding Options

Why this matters

The library serves about 55,000 active cardholders - more than half of Bellingham's roughly 99,000 residents. The Central Library alone records close to 400,000 visits a year. For a relatively small share of the City's general fund budget (6.4%), the library reaches a very large share of its residents.

That reach has grown faster than the library itself. Of the four service standards established for the library, the system currently sits at or below the minimum level on all four. Finding a sustainable way to fund the library is a goal we all share.

The direction

The four service standards for the library - facilities, open hours, materials, and staffing FTE - are measured against three service levels: Low, Medium, and High. On November 13, 2017, following a presentation by BERK consultants on the City-funded report “Bellingham Public Library Services and Funding Models Study,” the City Council voted unanimously to direct the Administration to move the library "to Goal 2 [Medium] or 3 [High] as a priority.” Recently, the Library Board completed a multi-year review and update of the original standards, submitted the standards to City Council for inclusion in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, and completed a gap analysis converting the standards into the staffing, operating, and capital requirements to reach the Medium level over the planning period 2028–2037. This is the lower of the two levels Council identified in 2017, with materials funded at the High level as a deliberate exception.

Current position

Today the library is at or below the Low standard in every category, even as the library’s budget has doubled in size from 2018-2027. Open hours have been reduced - Central is down from 56 hours a week in 2018 to 48 now, three of the four locations are open only 4 hours a day, and none are open evenings or on Sundays. The buildings have fallen furthest behind: as the city’s population has nearly doubled since the 1980s, library space has gone from meeting the highest standard to below the lowest. The collection has lost ground too, with materials spending pulled back to 2018 levels in recent budgets.

What it costs to reach Medium (with High level for materials)

Operating. Today's operating base is about $9.0 million. In order to achieve the Medium level of service over the next ten years (2028-2037), this baseline would need to grow gradually by restoring recent cuts first, and then phasing in the move to Medium – with additional funding allocated to support the High level of service for materials. The overall budget is estimated to rise about 4.5 percent per year for inflation and standard of living cost increases. By 2037, the operating base will have increased to approximately $21 million. Of the $12 million increase, much of this growth does not represent new services. About $6 million keeps today's library running and restores the recent cuts, adjusting annually for inflation. The remaining $6 million funds the move to a Medium level of service, with materials reaching the High level, adjusted annually for inflation. Examples of more robust library service include:

> **Open hours:** Central, Fairhaven, Barkley and Bellis Fair locations are each open evening, Sunday, and consistent daytime hours.
>
> **Materials:** Materials are funded at the High level of service. This approach adequately supports the growing demand for early learning print collections, as well as the growing demand for digital materials, which cost 3–5 times more than print copies. Compounding this, libraries are typically unable to acquire eBooks and eAudiobooks; they only purchase the right to lend them a specific number of times, forcing the library to incur these high subscription costs repeatedly for popular titles. Ultimately, funding at High is what keeps the collection from shrinking in real terms.

Capital. In addition to the operating budget, reaching the Medium facilities standard requires a $30 million capital investment over ten years. This funding expands the Bellis Fair and Barkley footprints, completes Phase 3 of the Central Library renovation, and updates Fairhaven to optimize public space. Costs are kept low by strategically expanding leased spaces at Bellis Fair and Barkley.

Funding Options

Implementing these service standards requires a defined funding strategy and thoughtful consideration of the potential Regional Fire Authority (RFA) ballot measure in February 2027. Approval of the RFA would relieve structural pressure on the General Fund, enabling the City to absorb more library costs directly. Conversely, a failure of the RFA measure might necessitate shifting a larger share of these funding obligations to a potential dedicated public levy. The frameworks detailed below outline structural paths for both outcomes.

If the RFA passes

	General Fund carries	**Potential library levy carries**
Option 1	Restored and permanently secured baseline, Medium level of service for operations – with High level of service for materials, Medium level of service for facilities/capital	—
Option 2	Restored and permanently secured baseline, Medium level of service for facilities/capital	Medium level of service for operations – with High level of service for materials
Option 3	Restored and permanently secured baseline	Medium level of service for operations – with High level of service for materials, Medium service level for facilities/capital

If the RFA does not pass

If the measure doesn't pass, the City will be working through harder budget choices, and more of the library's cost would fall to a potential levy. Even then, the City stays a partner: it secures and maintains the existing operating floor, so the levy builds on stable ground.

	General Fund carries	**Potential library levy carries**
Option 4	Permanently secured baseline	2025-2027 reductions restored, Medium level of service for operations – with High level of service for materials, Medium service level for facilities/capital

Reference points

Three current examples show these structures in practice:

- **Greenways:** As our closest local model, Greenways demonstrates how this framework might operate. Like the Parks levy, the library proposal would rely on a standard property tax lid-lift to secure revenue, tie funding to clear spending categories authorized by city ordinance, and follow a Library Board and City Council-approved strategic roadmap.
- **Seattle Public Library:** The Seattle City Council unanimously voted to place a library levy renewal on the August 2026 ballot. It functions like the supplemental funding structure considered here - stepping in to fund a higher level of service for open hours, collections, building maintenance, and technology.
- **New York City:** In 2026, New York permanently secured its library operating funds. Instead of relying on temporary budget restorations each year, the city established a protected financial floor that preserves services.

Topics for discussion

1. **Funding strategy:** Strengths and weaknesses of each pathway.
2. **A secured baseline:** Several proposed options rely on establishing a permanent funding floor for library operations. This ensures that any future voter-approved levy strictly enhances and scales library services rather than replacing existing city support.
3. **Messaging and coordination**: Establishing a shared narrative will ensure initiatives support, rather than complicate, one another.
4. **Levy timing:** If a dedicated public levy for the library becomes necessary, timing will be an important consideration.
5. **Legal and finance review:** We will need to research technical details to help guide the conversation. For example, whether capital and operating costs can legally be combined into a single levy, as well as recent WA state amendments to levy statutes.