

Library planning update August 3, 2021

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 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 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 “...moved 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.”

Approved Level of Service Standards					
<u>Standard</u>	<u>Date of Adoption</u>	<u>Low/ Minimal 1</u>	<u>Medium/ Operational 2</u>	<u>High/ Optimal 3</u>	2021
Library Facilities-- Square ft/capita	01/19/2016	0.6	0.8	1.0	.61 sf/cap
Open hours per week-- Central Library	06/21/2016	56	64	68	56 [Temporary 30 hrs/wk]
Open hours per week-- Branch Libraries	06/21/2016	28	36	40	28 [Temporary 24 hrs/wk]
Library Materials-- Expenditures/capita	03/21/2017	\$5.00	\$7.50	\$10.00	\$6.06
Library Staff Total FTE	03/13/2018	50	58	64	50.6 [Temporary 45.75 FTE]