

Bellingham Public Library, Facilities Master Plan 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

Existing 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 and Barkley branch are defined, including overlapping areas. The yellow and tan areas highlight portions of the current city limits + urban growth areas (UGA) that are underserved by existing Library locations.

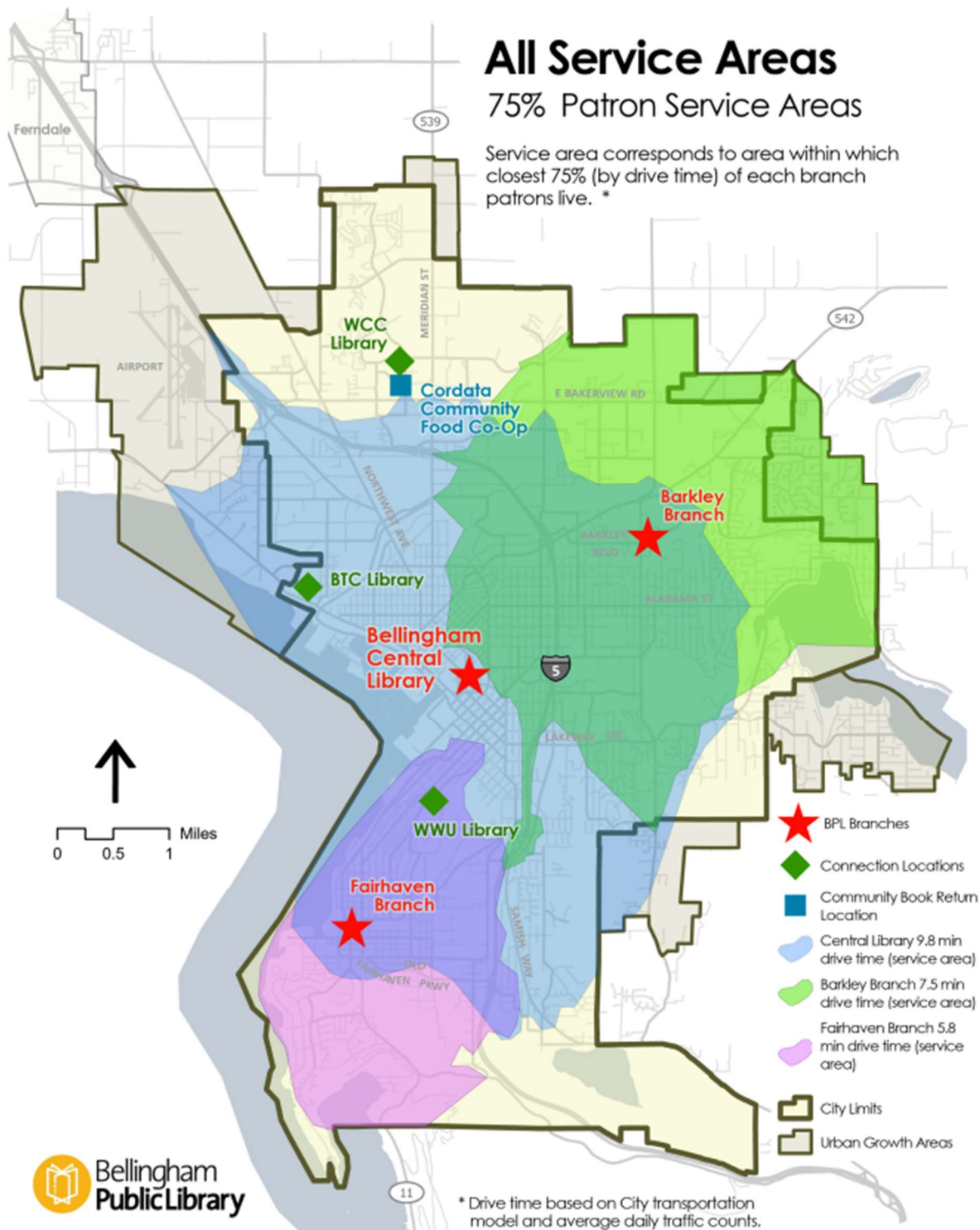


Figure 1: All service areas, Bellingham Public Library

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>0.6</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>1.0</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 sf/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.

Future Facility Needs Assessment

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

Table 2

<i>Population forecast (x1000)</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2027</i>	<i>2032</i>	<i>2042</i>
<i>City limits + UGA</i>	<i>104.6</i>	<i>110.8</i>	<i>117.2</i>	<i>129.4</i>

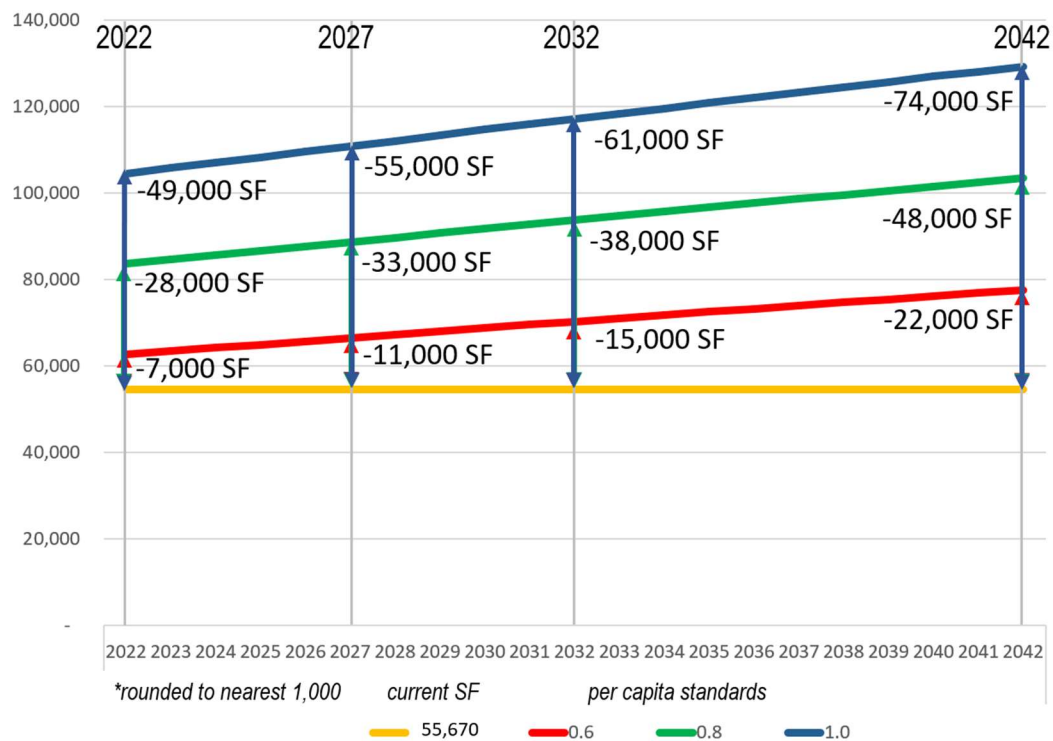
Future Facilities. The population forecast determines the additional square footage needed to achieve a higher level of service over the next 20 years. At present, the Bellingham Public Library has 55,670 sf over three locations:

- Central Library: 44,000 sf
- Fairhaven Library: 10,250 sf
- Barkley Library: 1,420 sf

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 (UGA).

Figure 2: Projected square footage shortfall, 2022-2042

Square Footage Shortfall per LOS Standards*



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 sf/capita) or Level 3 (1.0 sf/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.