

# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Whatcom County Council  
Criminal Justice & Public Safety

January 27, 2026





# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Behavioral Care Center Model

## *Overview of Discussion Today*

- What does “direction” mean?
- BCC Workgroup
- Proposed Model
- Site Considerations
- Request for motion



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Behavioral Care Center Model

## ***Prioritize treatment over incarceration while preserving public safety and reducing costs in the criminal legal system***

- An effective alternative to incarceration for individuals whose legal involvement is driven by mental illness or substance use without presenting risk to community safety.
- Divert individuals from deeper system involvement at the earliest possible intercept point.
- Support public safety and health outcomes through clinically appropriate, trauma-informed treatment.
- Reduce the strain on the jail system by addressing behavioral health needs in a therapeutic, community-based environment.
- Establish a financially sustainable and Medicaid-reimbursable solution that maximizes long-term viability.



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Behavioral Care Center Model

### ***Proposed Facility Services***

- *Co-occurring Inpatient Treatment*
- *Crisis Relief*
- *Psychiatric Urgent Care*

### ***Core Questions***

- Should the BCC be in or out of custody?
- Should the BCC be co-located with new jail at LaBounty or at the Division Street BH Campus?
- If located at the Division Street BH Campus, should it be a re-build of the Work Center or new building on vacant lot.



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Timeline of Key Milestones – BCC Workgroup

**March 31:** Formed BCC Workgroup at IPRTF meeting

**May 19:** Kick-off meeting. Discussed Nashville model and how to adapt it for Whatcom County.

**June 2nd:** Presentation Q&A with Nashville DA. Discussion of in vs out of custody, on vs off-site data, and reviewed eligible charges.

**August 14:** Presentation of proposed BCC model, discussion, general agreement.

**August 25:** Legal subgroup met to discuss and agree on legal framework.

**September 5th:** Final discussion to see if there were any disagreements, passed recommendation unanimously.

**September 9:** Subgroup meetings to talk about location and transportation.



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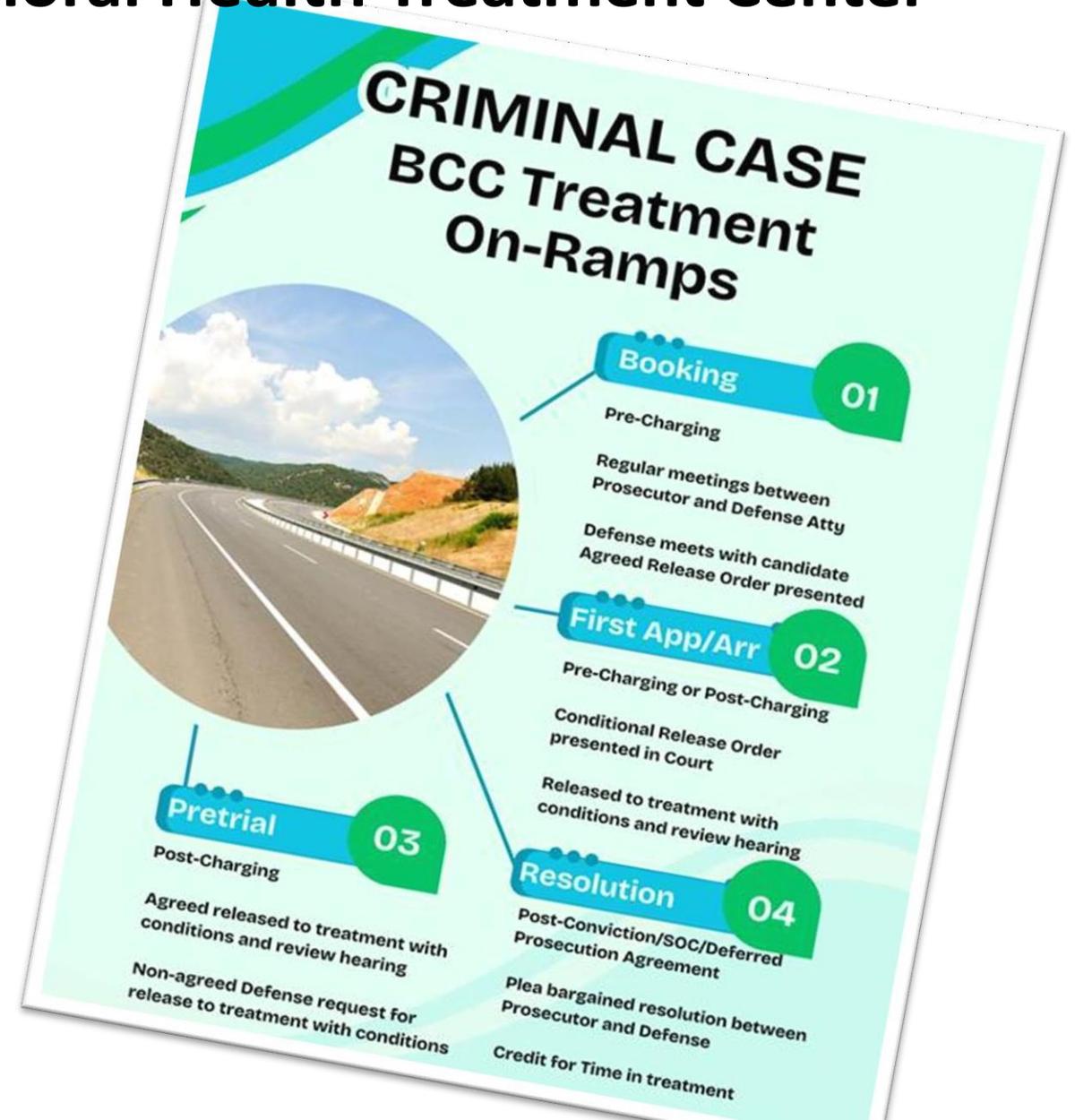
- **In vs out-of-custody**
  - Higher levels of safety
  - Flexibility
  - Reimbursement models
  - Medically necessary treatment
  - Location on intercept
- **On-site vs off-site**
  - Ease of access from current location
  - Focus of service
- **Size**
  - Behavioral health analysis
  - IMD
- **Co-location**
  - Efficiency models
  - Prevention



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## Legal Considerations:

- Types of Charges
- Victim Consideration
- Participation from Superior, District, and Municipal Courts
- Multiple Points of Entry
  - Pre-charging
  - First Appearance/Arrest
  - Post-Charging with Review Hearing
  - Disposition of a Case with Review Hearing





# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## **10/9/25 Finance and Facility Advisory Board:**

Motion to proceed with an out of custody facility with location to be further reviewed.

## **10/27/25 Incarceration Prevention Reduction**

**Task Force:** Motion to proceed with an out of custody facility with location to be further reviewed.

## **1/22/26 Finance and Facility Advisory Board:**

Motion to proceed with new construction at Division.

## **Community Presentations:**

7/3/25 Outreach Teams Meeting

8/28/25 Response Systems Leadership

9/11/25 Finance and Facility Advisory Board

9/18/25 Justice Project Oversight and Planning

9/22/25 Incarceration Prevention Reduction Task Force

9/22/25 Behavioral Health & Crisis Services

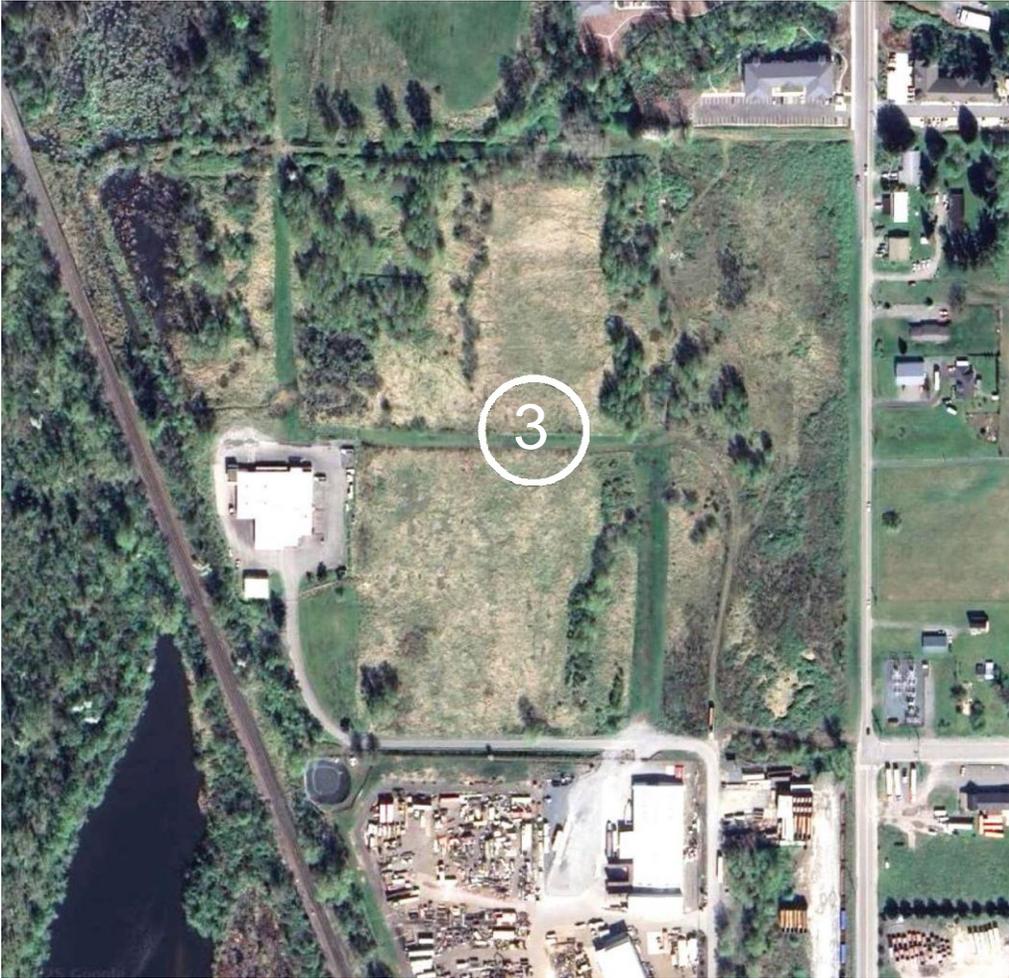
9/23/25 County Council

9/25/25 All Hands Panel

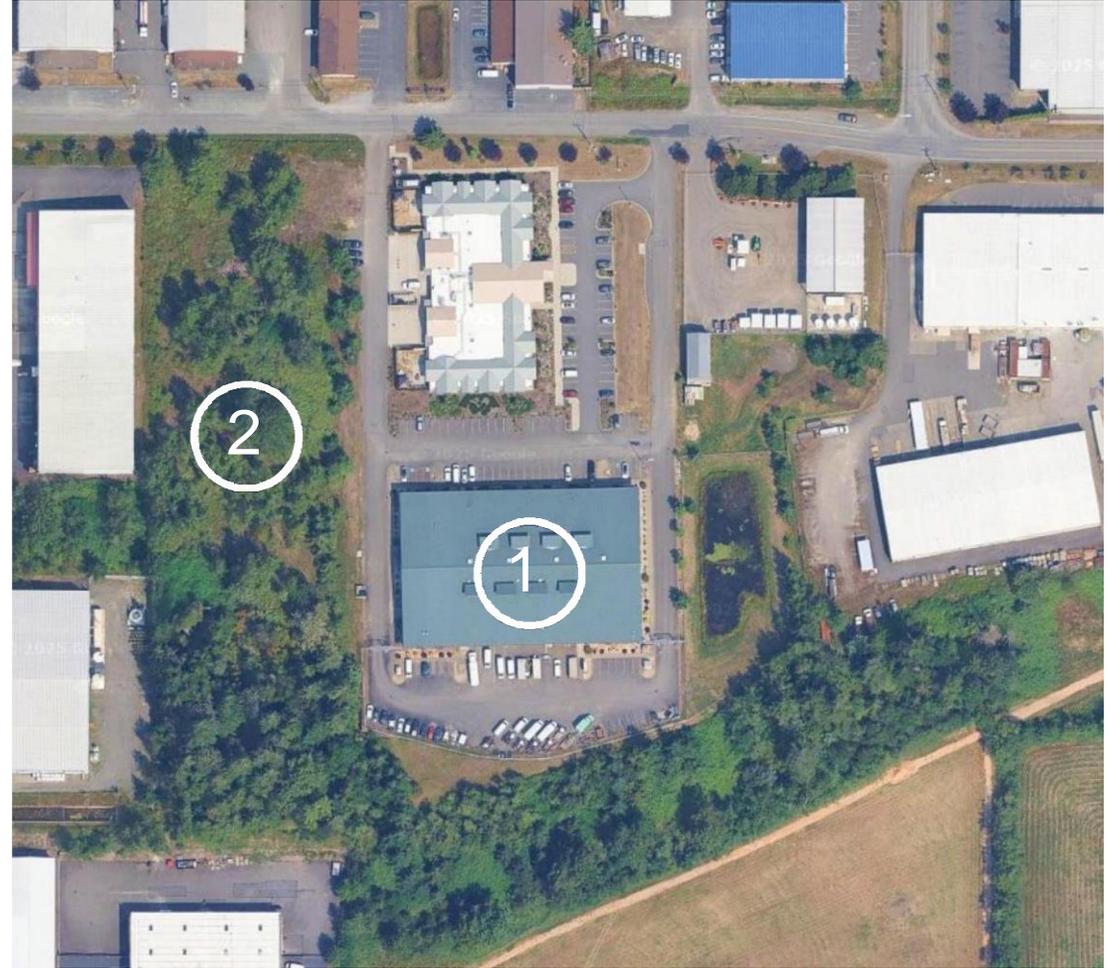
10/8/25 Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

10/21/25 Bellingham Central Library

10/29/25 PeaceHealth Social Work



SITE 3: La Bounty Dr.



SITE 2: 2000 Division St. Lot

SITE 1: Work Release Center





# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Site Comparison

Feature	Work Center	Division Street	La Bounty
<b>Construction Cost</b>	\$18.5M - \$22M	\$25M - \$29M	\$27M - \$31M
<b>Escalation &amp; Tax</b>	\$3.5M - \$4.5M	\$4M - \$5M	\$4.5M - \$5.5M
<b>Total Cost</b>	\$22M - \$26.5M	\$29M - \$34M	\$29.5M - \$36.5M



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Schedule factors

Construction timelines vary significantly

- Site 1: Must wait for jail completion. Start: 2/1/2029 (182 days).
- Site 2: Concurrent with jail. Start: 5/1/2027 (365 days).
- Site 3: Concurrent with jail. Start: 5/1/2027 (425 days).

Jail Construction: For reference, starts 2/1/2027 and lasts 730 days.



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## Work Center (Re-Build) Considerations

### Pros:

- Existing building/site development and utilities already in place.
- Proximity to Anne Deacon creates a Behavioral Health (BH) campus environment.

### Cons:

- Current jail facility use contradicts BH goals for a calming/healing environment.
- Lacks patient-facing landscaping; requires significant plumbing and structural upgrades.
- didg<sup>w</sup>álič wellness center could need to be relocated during (and potentially after) construction.



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Division Street (New Build) Considerations

### Pros:

- Purpose-built design for natural light and healing.
- Existing utilities adjacent (campus environment); wooded site provides nice context and saves on landscaping.
- didg<sup>w</sup>álič Wellness Center can remain open during construction.

### Cons:

- Narrow geometry limits building shape options.
- Proximity to industrial buildings and the rear of Anne Deacon is not ideal.
- Requires mitigation of a wetland portion of the site.



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## LaBounty (New Build) Considerations

### Pros:

- Most flexible design due to larger site size.
- Acts as a visual screen between neighbors and the jail; offers more "positive street appeal."
- didg<sup>w</sup>álič Wellness Center can remain open during construction.

### Cons:

- Protected area in the northeast corner with unknown implications.
- Highest cost due to deep foundation requirements and additional site development.
- Requires mitigation of a wetland portion of the site.



# Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

## Behavioral Care Center Model

### ***Staff, BCC Workgroup, and FFAB Consensus on Core Questions***

- Out-of-custody model best serves broad community's behavioral health needs
- The Division Street campus is the preferred site for the Behavioral Care Center
- New construction at Division Street Campus is referred due to timeline considerations, flexibility in building configuration and implementation of trauma informed design.

### ***Request for Council motion***

- Proceed with design for an out of custody Behavioral Care Center, to be newly constructed at the Division Street Campus.