

Whatcom County Justice Project

Draft Implementation Plan

June 6, 2023



Agenda

- Where we are in the Justice Project Implementation Planning Process.
- Highlights from the Town Hall Listening Session.
- Changes made to Implementation Plan since the last meeting.
- Proposed actions for year one.
- Recommendations and considerations regarding facilities.
- Overview of the proposed funding model.
- Your questions or suggestions about the Implementation Plan.

Implementation Planning Process

- **May 25 – 30:** Revised Implementation Plan based on feedback from focus groups, survey, and Town Hall.
- **May 31-June 12:** Review of Draft Implementation Plan by County Council, IPRTF/LJC, and the public.
- **June 13:** Revised Implementation Plan submitted to County Council.
- **June 20:** Gather final feedback from County Council.
- **June 30:** Final formatted Justice Project Implementation Plan submitted to County Council for July 11 meeting.

Town Hall Listening Session Recap

- Approximately 200 participants:
 - ~120 online
 - ~80 in-person
 - 50 made public comments
- Key Points:
 - General sense of urgency.
 - 14 – High level of concern about poor condition of the jail.
 - 12 – Want more, investment in housing/homelessness family and community support systems, substance use prevention/treatment, and mental health care.
 - 9 – Support building new jail.
 - 8 – Explicitly oppose building a jail.

Other take-aways from Town Hall

- Support for humane design.
- Question of whether a jail can be humane.
- Want commitment to facility maintenance.
- Want well-supported staffing of services and operations.
- Continued mixed opinions about:
 - Locations for facilities
 - Size of facilities
- Concern about how tax dollars will be spent/debt.

Changes made to Implementation Plan

Based on input from:

- *Focus groups*
- *Survey*
- *Town Hall*
- *Public comments*

- Oversight, Accountability, and Transparency is *first*.
- More specificity for how to include BIPOC communities and people with lived experience in monitoring and planning.
- Address workforce shortages - the first step to increase service capacity.

Changes to Implementation Plan

Language
changed to reflect
approach

- **Previous version:** Build a safe and humane jail, coordinating with a Behavioral Care Center to provide secure, short-term behavioral health treatment as an alternative to jail for people charged with a crime.
- **New version:** Build a Public Safety and Health Center to provide secure detention and an array of rehabilitation services and diversion options including facilities for people who pose a significant threat to public safety and alternatives for lower-risk offenders (e.g., work release), coordinated with a Behavioral Care Center that offers inpatient mental health and substance use disorder treatment as an alternative to incarceration.

Concerns raised and clarifications requested

- FAQ being developed to answer questions that are being raised.
- Some key points to share with Council today.



Initial Action Items

Key Actions starting year one:

- Form the JPOP and the Finance & Operations Advisory Board.
- Hire a Criminal Justice Informatics Specialist and a Senior Applications Administrator to plan data collection and build data dashboard.
- Provide staff support for Mental Health Sentencing Alternative and expanded mental health court
- Design and build the 23-hr Crisis Relief Center (\$9 million from state just granted for this project).
- Begin the design process for the (Public Safety and Health Center) PSHC.

Key Actions starting year one:

- Hire 3 re-entry support staff for the existing jail.
- Assess supportive housing needs, gaps, and necessary funding supports, including outreach to Nooksack and Lummi communities.
- Release a Request for Proposals for small recovery/supportive housing capital projects.
- Hire a contractor to develop a prosecutorial diversion and/or competency restoration pilot program.
- Advocate for state funding and policy supporting diversion and alternative pathways for competency restoration.
- Advocate for submission and funding of a state Medicaid waiver.



Decisions about Facilities

Recommendations
emerging from SAC
and IPRTF
re: **Facilities**

- All three County-owned properties should be used for Justice Project-related facilities.
- Civic Center should be ruled out as site for PSHC based on costs and size constraints of property.
- Size of incarceration facilities should be:
 - Correctly sized, based on a fair analysis of population growth, along with strategic investments to avoid unnecessary incarcerations.

(And)

- Sized and operated to ensure booking restrictions in the county and its cities will not occur.

Conceptual cost estimates

- Conceptual cost estimates for detention beds were based on 400-440 beds. This is the current capacity of Jail + Work Center (359 beds) + 20% peaking & classification factor.
- Conceptual cost estimates for PSHC facility (without Behavioral Care Center):
 - Horizontal design (\$137M) is 66% of the cost estimate for a 7-story vertical design (\$207M), and 80% of the cost of a 5-story vertical design (\$170M).
- Additional 60-75 Behavioral Care Center beds estimated cost = \$8M.

Note: These estimates will be refined when all site, capacity, and design criteria are identified.

Considerations for Facilities

- Preliminary conceptual cost estimates used to identify the order of magnitude difference between the horizontal and vertical facility costs
- Size intended as baseline and may not account for booking restrictions being lifted, and
- Assume that prevention and reduction efforts would keep pace with growing population
- Two site alternatives for the PSHC are recommended as alternatives for Council's determination, with pros and cons listed.



Funding Sources and Sequencing

Funding Sources and Uses

- Public health, safety, and justice sales and use tax
- This is the proposed sales and use tax that would provide **part of the funds** needed for the Justice Project Implementation Plan.
- There are other sources of local, state, and federal funding which have been secured, and more will be sought.

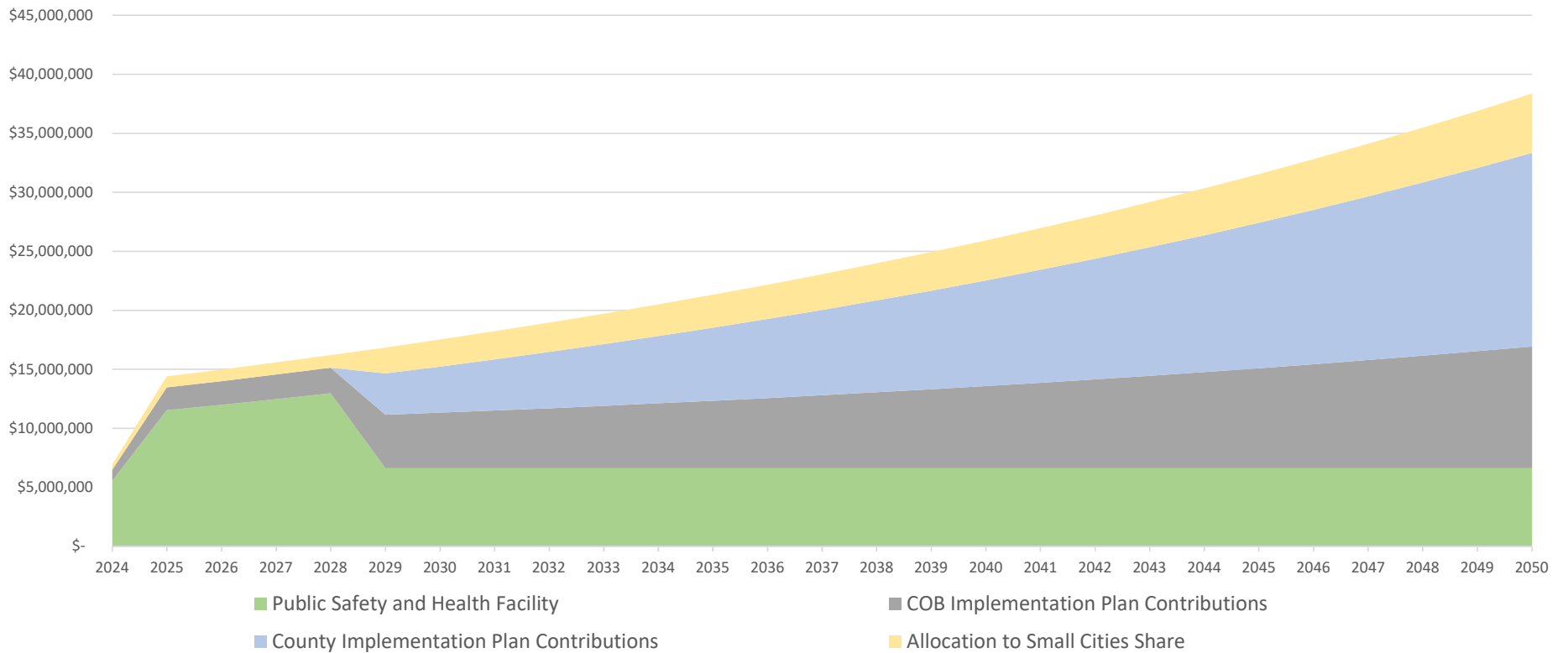
Sequencing

- If a Sales Tax is approved by voters, it would generate approximately \$13.5 million (60/40 county-city) in the first full year of collected revenue.
- Our big-ticket item will be the Public Safety and Justice Center.
- We would begin collecting revenue from the sales tax in the first 4-6 years and save most of it as the “down payment.”
- In about 2-3 years, we will have the facilities design completed, and will be able to pay money up front on construction costs to reduce the interest and annual ongoing fees on a bond.

And take action...

County and cities' investments in the Implementation Plan, phased to build needed facilities soon - and reduce debt service costs.

Anticipated Expenditure Allocations for 0.2% Sales and Use Tax





DRAFT
Implementation Plan

**—CONDITIONS—
INCREASING:**

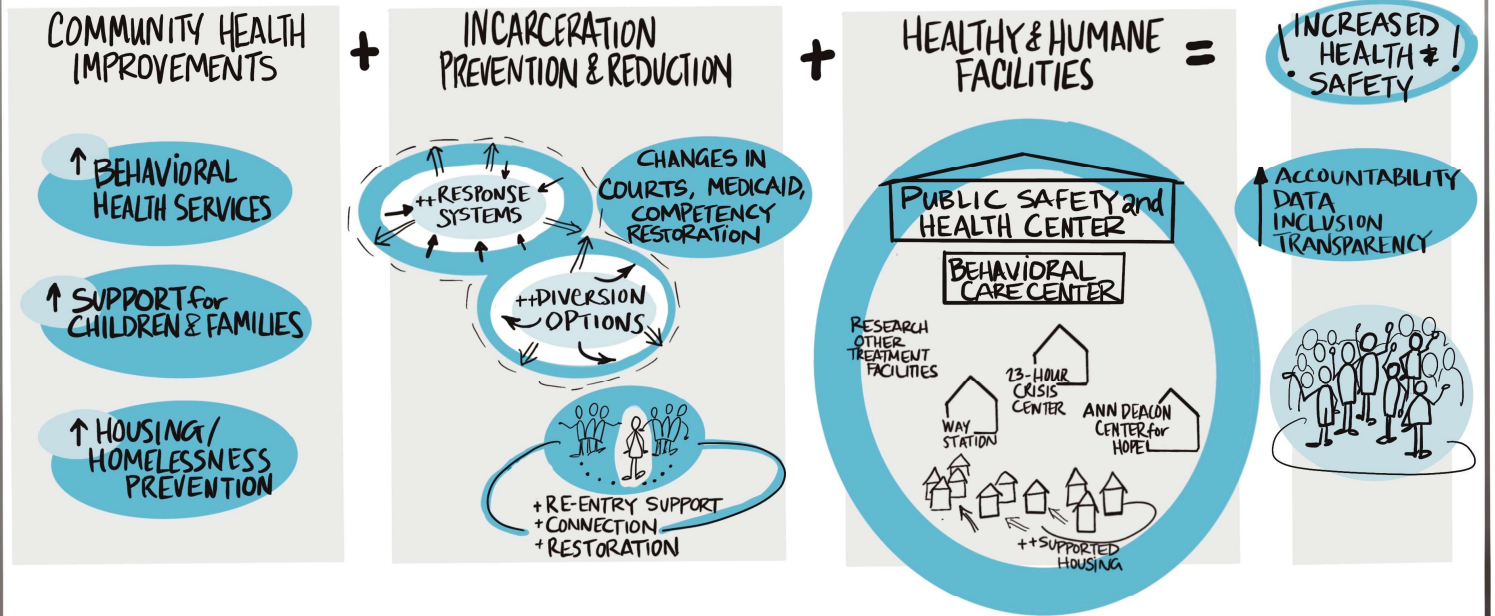
- ↑ POPULATION
- ↑ HOUSING PRICES
- ↑ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- ↑ MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- ↑ HOMELESSNESS
- ↑ CRIME

WHATCOM COUNTY JUSTICE PROJECT



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

CONTINUE COUNTY INVESTMENTS IN...



**What parts of the
Implementation Plan
do you have questions
or suggestions about?**

Final Draft Implementation Plan

15 projects in
5 categories

Ensure Oversight, Accountability, and Transparency

Increase Access to Behavioral Health Services

Build the Array of Facilities Needed to Promote Public Safety and Health

Expand the Capacity of Programs to Reduce Incarceration/Re-incarceration

Make Systems Changes with Local, Regional, & State Partners

Ensure
Oversight,
Accountability
and
Transparency,

- 1. Establish a Justice Project Oversight & Planning (JPOP) Committee** including members of BIPOC communities and people with lived experience.
- 2. Establish a Finance and Operations Justice Project Advisory Board.**
- 3. Collect data to measure progress toward desired outcomes and develop data dashboard.**

Increase Access to Behavioral Health Services

- 4. Address workforce shortages in behavioral health services.**
- 5. Build systems to facilitate communication and coordination between organizations** providing services for a seamless continuum of care.
- 6. Increase the capacity of effective existing programs to divert people from incarceration** in tandem with community support services.

Build the
Array of
Facilities
Needed to
Promote
Public Safety
and Health

7. **Build a 23-hour Crisis Relief Center** (Behavioral Health Urgent Care open all hours, seven days per week).
8. **Build a Public Safety and Health Center** to provide secure detention and an array of rehabilitation services and diversion options... coordinated with a Behavioral Care Center.
9. **Assess what additional facilities are needed to support people with behavioral health issues at risk of incarceration.**

Expand the
Capacity of
Programs to
Reduce
Incarceration/
Re-incarceration

- 10. Ensure people leaving detention and treatment facilities have transportation to a safe destination.**
- 11. Bolster Re-entry Support Services** including establishing locations where people can receive coordinated re-entry support services.
- 12. Maintain and expand supportive housing programs for people with behavioral health issues and a history of incarceration.**

Make
Systems
Changes
with Local,
Regional, &
State
Partners

- 13. Continue to make changes in court systems** to reduce the number of people detained in jail, and the length of time they spend in jail before trial.
- 14. Expedite access to competency restoration services.**
- 15. Advocate for a state waiver to allow use of Medicaid funds to pay for medical and behavioral health services for incarcerated individuals.**