



# Memorandum

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
**FROM:** Erika Lautenbach, Director  
**RE:** Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authorities (BWCHA) – Samish Commons Early Learning Child Care Center Contract  
**DATE:** **OCTOBER 18, 2024**

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Attached is a contract between Whatcom County and BWCHA for your review and signature.

- **Background and Purpose**

Through a competitive bidding process (RFP 23-87), the Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authority (BWCHA) was selected and recommended for a contract that partially funds the development of a licensed child care facility in the affordable housing complex known as Samish Commons, located at 301 N Samish Way in Bellingham. Upon completion, this project will create forty (40) additional child care slots for children ages 1 week to 2.5 years. At least 20% of all slots will be reserved for children from households that have an income 80% or lower than the current area median income (AMI) for the City of Bellingham.

According to the latest census<sup>1</sup>, there are approximately 10,500 children under the age of five living in Whatcom County. The total current child care capacity in the County is, however, only 3,686 children enrolled in 106 programs<sup>2</sup> leaving a substantial service gap. Access to safe and affordable access to childcare is more salient among families at or below the federal poverty line: in a low income needs assessment<sup>3</sup> conducted by the Opportunity Council, childcare access was ranked as one of the most important needs for families with children under five who also ranked it as lowest in availability across multiple needs.

- **Funding Amount and Source**

Funding for this contract, in an amount not to exceed \$1,093,637 is provided by the Community Priorities Fund. These funds are included in the 2024 budget. Council authorization is required, per WCC 3.08.100, as funding for this contract exceeds \$40,000.

Please contact Eric Chambers, Special Projects Manager at 360-778-6199 ([EKChambe@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:EKChambe@co.whatcom.wa.us)) or Ann Beck, Community Health & Human Services Manager at 360-778-6055 ([ABeck@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:ABeck@co.whatcom.wa.us)), if you have any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/whatcomcountywashington>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oppco.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ELAFS-Community-Needs-Assessment-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.oppco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Community-Needs-Assessment\\_09.15.21editspdf.pdf](https://www.oppco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Community-Needs-Assessment_09.15.21editspdf.pdf)