



Program Scope Summary

AUGUST 6, 2026

Prepared by:





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Program Scope Summary documents the current recommended program for the Whatcom County Jail following completion of the Validation Phase. This document summarizes how the project team aligned operational priorities, stakeholder input, and facility programming with the County's current capital budget while preserving the project's long-term goals for safety, operational efficiency, behavioral health, and future flexibility. Program information on the Behavioral Care Center will be delivered separately once validation concludes.

Throughout validation, Facilities Management, the Sheriff's Office, Health and Community Services, other county departments, and the Design-Build Team evaluated numerous program alternatives to reduce the original program from approximately 227,000 square feet to an estimated 150,000-155,000 square feet. The resulting program reflects extensive collaboration and numerous decisions balancing operational requirements, future adaptability, staffing considerations, community priorities, and project cost. While significant progress has been made, several elements continue to be refined as design advances.

This document summarizes the major outcomes of that effort. The recommended program:

- Preserves the operational functions necessary to safely operate a modern correctional facility.
- Expands behavioral health beds, medical supervision, and diversion screening.
- Expands capacity and classification capabilities while improving flexibility across housing types.
- Improves staff support, intake, security operations, public access, and administrative functions compared to the existing facility.
- Balances operational performance with the County's current capital budget through targeted scope reductions and program refinements.
- Maintains flexibility to accommodate future operational needs as funding opportunities and design development continue.

Several program elements remain under active evaluation. These include incorporation of two courtrooms within the currently programmed court space, opportunities to provide contact visitation, operational functions (e.g. additional warehouse space), and delivery of the proposed Rapid Resource Center. The project team continues to evaluate design alternatives and funding opportunities in each of these areas while advancing the overall project.

This Program Scope Summary should be viewed as a snapshot of the project at the conclusion of validation rather than a final design document. As design progresses, additional efficiencies may be identified, operational refinements may be incorporated, and remaining policy decisions will continue to be resolved through the County's governance and decision-making process. Updates will be provided to County Leadership and Council at key project milestones, and issues affecting scope, budget, schedule, or policy will be elevated as necessary.



The remainder of this document is organized by functional area and provides a summary of the spaces included in the current recommended program, the operational outcomes each area is intended to support, and any significant items that remain under evaluation. This organization is intended to give County Council a clear understanding of what is included in the current program, how the facility will function, and where additional refinement is anticipated as design progresses.

1.0 Public Lobby

The Public Lobby is designed to provide a secure, welcoming, and efficient point of entry for visitors to the facility. The recommended program includes security screening, waiting areas, public restrooms, reception workstations, and supporting back-of-house spaces. Compared to the existing facility, the proposed lobby expands waiting areas, improves the visitor screening process, and provides more direct access to visitation, the courtroom, and attorney meeting areas.

2.0 Facility Administration

The Facility Administration area is designed to support the daily administrative functions of the jail and provide appropriate workspace for staff and visiting professionals. The recommended program includes offices for jail administration, space for visiting professionals and interviews, a small conference room, server rooms, file storage, and staff restrooms. Compared to the existing facility, the proposed program provides purpose-built administrative space, replacing areas that have been retrofitted for uses they were not originally designed to support.

3.0 Staff Support

The Staff Support area is designed to improve staff wellbeing, training, and operational readiness. The recommended program includes staff locker rooms and showers, roll call and shift briefing rooms, training rooms, a mock cell for staff training, a fitness room, a breakroom, and a quiet/respice room. Compared to the existing facilities, the proposed program provides purpose-built staff support spaces that foster recruitment, retention, and employee wellbeing while consolidating functions currently divided between the downtown jail and the work center into a single, more efficient location.

4.0 Security Operations

The Security Operations area is designed to support the safe, secure, and efficient operation of the facility. The recommended program includes offices for the Security Chief and administrative staff, the central control room and associated sally port operations, an Emergency Response Team muster room and storage, and armory storage. These spaces are strategically located to support daily operations, emergency response, and staff coordination. The adjacency of the control room to the public lobby improves oversight of individuals entering and exiting the secure portions of the facility while enhancing overall security and operational efficiency.

5.0 Intake/Release

The Intake/Release area is designed to support the safe, secure, and efficient processing of individuals entering and leaving the facility. The recommended program includes a secure vehicular sally port sized to accommodate emergency vehicles and a passenger bus, dedicated pre-admissions processing areas, intake screening and classification spaces, healthcare triage



and examination rooms, mental health screening, secure holding areas, inmate property processing, and transport and release functions. The area also includes purpose-built staff support spaces to improve operational efficiency.

Compared to the existing downtown jail, the proposed program significantly expands intake and release operations by providing dedicated spaces for arresting officers, diversion screening, healthcare and behavioral health screening, classification, and property processing. The improved layout enhances operational flow, increases staff efficiency, and creates a safer, more functional environment for staff, law enforcement, and individuals entering or leaving custody.

6.0 Courts

The Court area is designed to accommodate in-custody arraignments, first appearances, pre-trial hearings, motions, and similar proceedings without transporting inmates to the downtown courthouse. The recommended program includes a courtroom with space for a judge's bench, court clerk, prosecutor, defense counsel, defendant seating, and public seating, along with judges' chambers and a workroom for judges and court staff. The area also includes holding cells for inmates awaiting court proceedings, four visitation booths, and interview rooms.

Current Status: The program currently shows one courtroom within the available area. The project team recognizes the County's priority to provide two courtrooms within this space and will continue working collaboratively with the Courts and Design-Build Team to evaluate alternatives that would accommodate a second courtroom while remaining within the project's space and budget constraints. Updates will be provided as design progresses.

7.0 Housing

The recommended housing program provides an estimated capacity of 450 to 460 beds organized across nine primary housing units, with approximately 72 to 75 percent of the beds designated for the male population and 22 to 25 percent for the female population. The program is designed to support safe operations, effective inmate classification, behavioral health services, and inmate programming while providing greater operational and classification flexibility than the existing jail. Each housing unit includes access to outdoor recreation and programming space, with several units sharing recreation areas. Most units also include privacy carrels for video visitation and are designed to support both direct and indirect supervision. The following sections summarize the purpose, configuration, and key operational features of each housing unit.

Quantity

	Current Jail	New Facility
Bed Count	359-427	450 - 460
Operating Capacity	~300	~410
Male Beds	~370	360
Female Beds	~57	96
Behavioral Health Focused Beds	0	120
Medical / Detox Beds	14	40



WHATCOM COUNTY
JUSTICE FACILITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER
Program Scope Summary
August 6, 2026

Unit Types

Unit	Cell Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Unit 1	Quad	48	0	48	0	0	0
Unit 2	Quad	48	0	48	0	0	0
Unit 3	Single	48	2	48	0	0	0
Unit 4	Single	56	2	32	24	32	0
Unit 5	Mixed quad/single	64	4	0	64	8	0
Unit 6	Quad	64	0	64	0	0	0
Unit 7	Single	40	5	24	16	40	0
Unit 8	Quad	48	0	48	0	48	0
Unit 9	Mixed Medical	40	2	28	12	0	40

Unit 1: Male Orientation – 12 quad units (7.100)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Quad	48	0	48	0	0	0

This unit is intended to serve as the primary orientation and intake housing unit, accommodating inmates for up to 48 hours while they are assessed, processed, released, or classified for placement into long-term housing. The unit consists of 12 quad-occupancy cells and is designed to support efficient intake operations and inmate movement. A shared outdoor recreation area is provided with an adjacent housing unit.

Unit 2: Male Medium Custody – 12 quad units (7.100)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Quad	48	0	48	0	0	0

This unit is configured similarly to Unit 1, consisting of 12 quad-occupancy cells, but is designated to house the male medium-custody population. The layout supports efficient operations while providing appropriate housing for this classification. A shared outdoor recreation area is provided with an adjacent housing unit.

Unit 3: Male General Population Maximum & Restrictive Housing – 48 single occupancy beds (7.300)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Single	48	2	48	0	0	0

This unit consists of a principal housing unit with 24 single-occupancy cells and two 12-cell subunits. All cells are designed to allow future conversion to double occupancy, providing long-term operational flexibility. The principal unit and each subunit include dedicated dayrooms, allowing the spaces to operate independently and supporting a range of inmate classifications.



WHATCOM COUNTY
JUSTICE FACILITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER
Program Scope Summary
August 6, 2026

Because this unit is intended for maximum custody and restrictive housing, it also includes a dedicated outdoor recreation area.

Unit 4: Flex Unit 1 – Male Behavioral Health, Special Needs and Protective Custody, Female Restrictive Housing and Maximum Custody (7.400)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Single	56	2	32	24	32	0

This unit consists of two independently operated subunits that share a dedicated outdoor recreation area. The first subunit houses 32 males in single-occupancy cells for the behavioral health, special needs, and protective custody populations and includes a dedicated dayroom. The second subunit houses 24 females in single-occupancy cells for maximum custody and restrictive housing classifications. Sight and sound barriers provide separation between the two subunits, supporting appropriate security, privacy, and inmate classification.

Unit 5: Female General Population Minimum/Medium custody, Work Force, Orientation, Protective Custody, and Behavioral Health / Special Needs (7.600)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Mixed (quad/single)	64	4	0	64	8	0

This unit is designed to accommodate the majority of the female population. It consists of a principal housing unit with 32 beds in eight quad-occupancy cells and four subunits, each containing eight single-occupancy cells. This configuration provides operational flexibility by supporting a range of classifications, including workforce, orientation, protective custody, and behavioral health/special needs populations, while maintaining appropriate separation between groups. The unit includes a dedicated outdoor recreation area.

Unit 6: Work Force, Minimum Custody – 16 quad units (7.100)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Quad	48	0	48	0	0	0

This unit is configured similarly to Unit 1, consisting of 16 quad-occupancy cells designed to house the workforce inmate population. The layout supports efficient operations while accommodating inmates participating in work programs. A shared outdoor recreation area is provided with an adjacent housing unit.

Unit 7: Flex Unit 4 - Behavioral Health – Acute 24 Male, 16 Female (8.400)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Single	40	5	24	16	40	0



WHATCOM COUNTY
JUSTICE FACILITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT CENTER
Program Scope Summary
August 6, 2026

This unit is designed to accommodate male and female inmates with acute and subacute behavioral health needs. It includes a multipurpose room, an interview room, and a shared outdoor recreation area.

The male side includes a principal unit with three safety cells and a calming room adjacent to the dayroom, along with three subunits containing eight single-occupancy cells each. Each subunit has a dedicated dayroom to support appropriate separation and independent operation.

The female side includes a principal unit with 10 single-occupancy cells for inmates with subacute behavioral health needs, as well as a calming room and space for a mental health clinician. A separate subunit provides four single-occupancy cells and two safety cells for inmates with acute behavioral health needs and includes its own dayroom. Sight and sound separation is provided between the male and female sides of the unit.

Unit 8: Behavioral Health Subacute (8.500)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Quad	48	0	48	0	48	0

This unit is designed to house the male subacute behavioral health population. It consists of 12 quad-occupancy cells accommodating up to 48 inmates and incorporates spaces that support behavioral health programming, including an interview room, a mental health clinician office, and a calming room. The unit includes a dedicated outdoor recreation area.

Unit 9: Flex Unit 3 – Medical & Detox (8.300)

Type	Total Beds	Subunits	Male	Female	BH Beds	Med/Detox Beds
Mixed Medical	40	2	28	12	0	40

This unit serves as the jail's medical housing unit. It includes a nurse's station, medical supply storage, shared and single-occupancy patient rooms for both male and female inmates, and dedicated spaces that support safe, supervised detoxification. Rather than a traditional outdoor recreation area, the unit includes a secure fresh-air court that supports the short-term medical needs of patients who are expected to transition to other housing units as their condition allows.

8.0 Healthcare

The Healthcare area is designed to support the medical, dental, and behavioral health needs of the inmate population while improving staff efficiency and access to care. The programmed space includes administrative offices, medical records storage, interview rooms, laboratory space, medical and dental exam rooms, and general medical supply storage. Compared to the existing jail, the proposed program significantly expands clinical treatment space, administrative support, and storage capacity, resulting in improved operational efficiency and delivery of healthcare services.



9.0 Visitation

The visitation area is designed to support secure, convenient access for family members, legal counsel, and other authorized visitors. In addition to visitation provided within the Court area, the recommended program includes 10 in-person visitation booths located adjacent to the public lobby. Their location improves access for attorneys, professional visitors, and the public while supporting efficient facility operations.

Current Status: The County Council has identified contact visitation as a desired feature of the facility. While contact visitation is not currently feasible within the recommended program and available budget, opportunities to incorporate it will continue to be evaluated as design progresses. Updates will be provided at future project milestones.

10.0 Programs and Services

The Programs and Services area is designed to support inmate programming, classification, records management, and specialized operational functions within a centralized location. The recommended program includes housing support, classification and records, two video arraignment booths, a large multipurpose classroom, and a small multipurpose counseling room. By consolidating functions that are currently dispersed throughout the existing jail, the proposed program improves operational efficiency, coordination, and access to services for the in-custody population.

11.0 Food Service

The Food Service area is designed to support the preparation and delivery of meals for the inmate population while improving operational efficiency and staff support. The recommended program includes staff work areas, staff dining, a commercial kitchen, walk-in coolers and freezers, dry storage, food preparation areas, and supporting kitchen equipment. Compared to the existing downtown jail, the proposed kitchen is approximately five times larger, providing the capacity needed to improve operations, safety, and efficiency.

12.0 Laundry

The Laundry area is designed to support the facility's inmate clothing and linen operations in a safe and efficient environment. The recommended program includes three large and one small washer and dryer, dedicated areas for soiled and clean linen storage, folding and sorting stations, and supporting housekeeping functions. Compared to the existing downtown jail, the proposed laundry is significantly larger and provides a dedicated space separate from the kitchen, improving operations, safety, and efficiency.

13.0 Warehouse / Commissary

The Warehouse area is designed to support facility storage, receiving, and mail operations. The recommended program includes approximately 1,100 square feet of warehouse space, along with a small mailroom. While this space provides the core functions needed to support facility operations, the current warehouse is expected to be undersized relative to the long-term storage needs of the new facility. Opportunities to improve storage capacity will continue to be evaluated as the design progresses.



14.0 Maintenance / Central Plant

The Facilities Management area is designed to support on-site maintenance and repair operations for the jail. The recommended program includes workspace and material storage for Facilities Management staff, allowing routine maintenance and repairs to be performed more efficiently within the facility.

15.0 Rapid Resource Center

The Rapid Resource Center is intended to provide a centralized location for reentry planning and connections to community-based services, supporting successful transitions from custody to the community, while also encompassing related services such as assigned counsel and the alternative programs office. While funding for the Rapid Resource Center has not yet been secured, the recommended program preserves space within the facility to allow it to be incorporated should funding become available. Funding opportunities will continue to be pursued, and updates regarding funding status and next steps will be provided following the upcoming legislative session.

CONCLUSION

The Validation Phase has established a recommended program that balances operational needs, stakeholder priorities, and the County's current financial framework. Although difficult decisions were required to align the program with the available budget, the recommended program preserves the core functions needed to support a safe, modern, and adaptable justice facility while providing flexibility for future enhancements as opportunities arise.

As the project advances into design, the recommended program will continue to be refined through ongoing collaboration with County leadership, the Sheriff's Office, the Courts, Health and Community Services, Facilities Management, and other project stakeholders. Design development is expected to identify additional opportunities to improve efficiency and functionality while continuing to incorporate stakeholder input as the project progresses.

The "*Current Status*" notes included throughout this document identify program elements that remain under evaluation and will serve as the basis for future updates as the project progresses.

Updates will be provided to County leadership and Council at key project milestones. Material changes affecting scope, budget, schedule, operational performance, or policy will be documented, evaluated, and elevated through the established decision-making process. This approach provides transparency while allowing the project to continue moving forward in a deliberate and disciplined manner.

The recommended program establishes a strong foundation for the next phase of design and provides a clear framework for continued collaboration, informed decision-making, and transparent communication as the project advances.