

Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

Behavioral Care Center Updates

January 13, 2026





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.



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Proposed Facility Services

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

Core Questions

- Should the BCC be in our out of custody?
- Should the BCC be co-located with new jail or at the Division Street Behavioral Health Campus?



Justice Facility & Behavioral Health Treatment Center

IPRTF BCC Workgroup Participants:

Donnell Tanksley and Caleb Erickson, Sheriff's Office

Eric Richey and Erik Sigmar, PA

Heather Flaherty, IPRTF

Judge Jones, Superior Court

Malora Christensen and Hannah Fisk, WCHCS

Peter Frazier, IPRTF

Starck Follis and Maia Vanyo, PD

Adam Johnson and Ashley McClaran, STV



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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/Arraignment
 - Post-Charging with Review Hearing
 - Disposition of a Case with Review Hearing





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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.

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

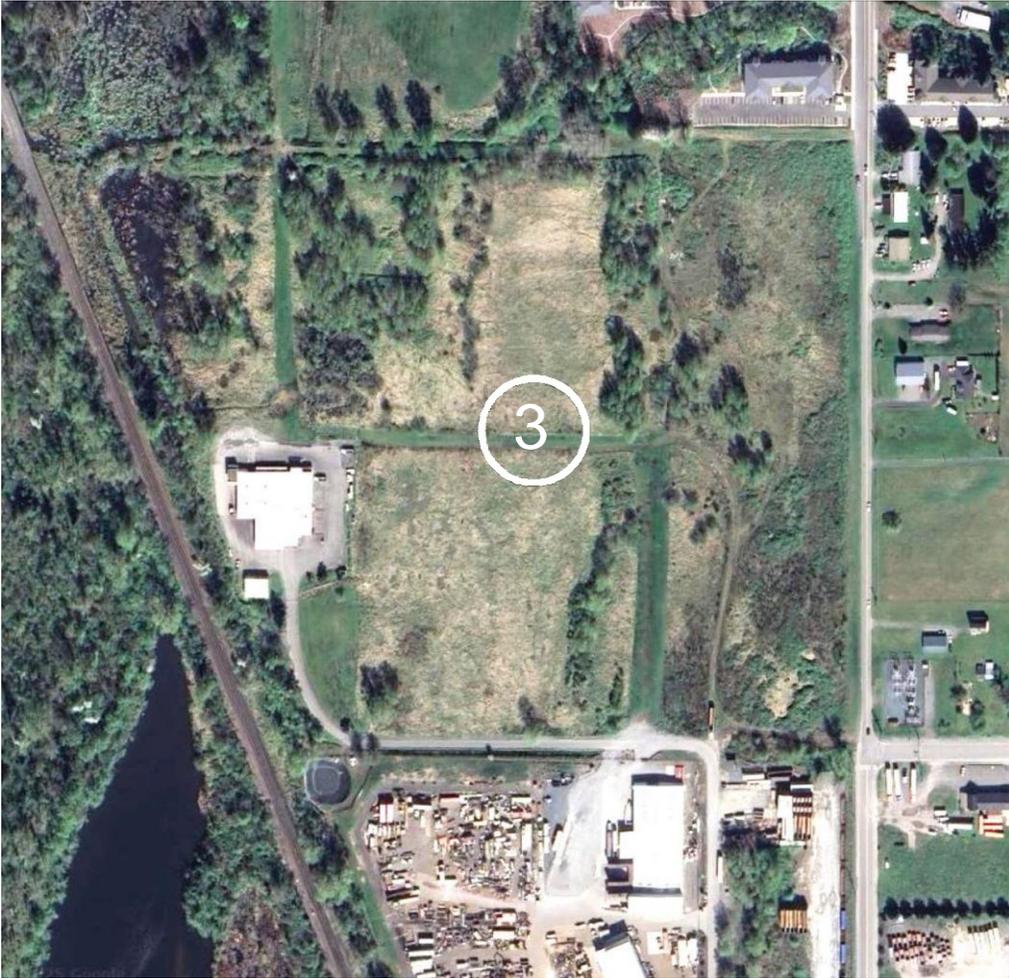
9/25/25 All Hands Panel

10/8/25 Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

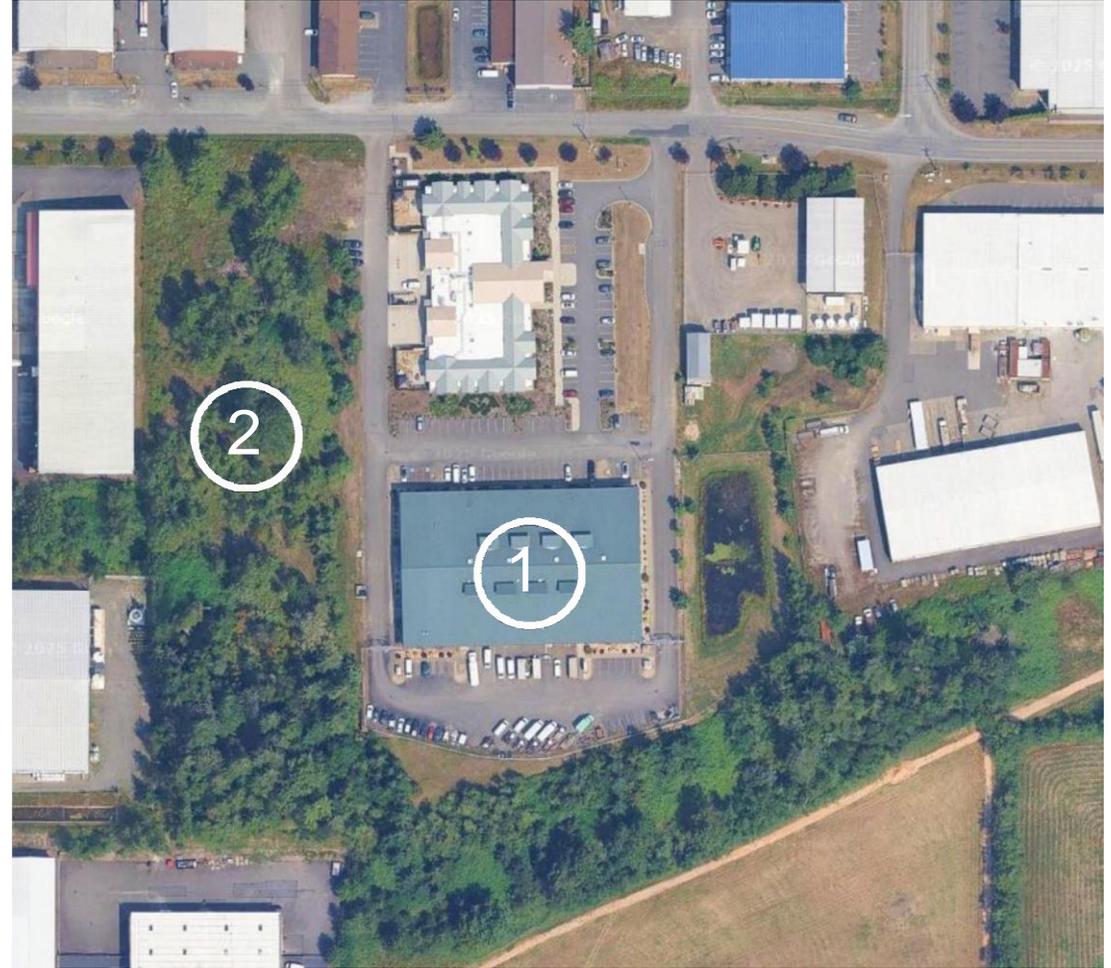
10/21/25 Bellingham Central Library

10/29/25 PeaceHealth Social Work

Final: 11/24/25 Child & Family Well-Being Task Force Meeting



SITE 3: La Bounty Dr.

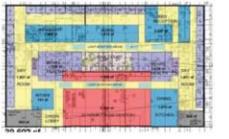
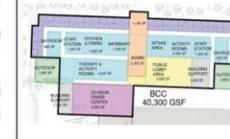


SITE 2: 2000 Division St.

SITE 1: Work Release Center



Whatcom County Behavioral Care Center Study Summary
Date: 11/07/2025

													
	Site 1: Work Center	Site 2: Division Street	Site 3: La Bounty Drive										
Cost	Construction Cost: \$18.5M - \$22M Escalation and Sales Tax: \$3.5M - \$4.5M Total Construction Cost: \$22M - \$26.5M	Construction Cost: \$25M - \$29M Escalation and Sales Tax: \$4M - \$5M Total Construction Cost: \$29M - \$34M	Construction Cost: \$27M - \$31M Escalation and Sales Tax: \$4.5M - \$5.5M Total Construction Cost: \$29.5M - \$36.5M										
Schedule Factors	Construction start after completion of new jail construction	Construction can run concurrently with construction of the new jail	Construction can run concurrently with construction of the new jail										
	<p style="text-align: center;">Construction Schedule by Site Option</p>  <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Start Date</th> <th>Site 3: Labounty Street</th> <th>Site 2: Division Street</th> <th>Site 1: Work Center</th> <th>Jail Construction</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Days</td> <td>425</td> <td>365</td> <td>182</td> <td>730</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Start Date	Site 3: Labounty Street	Site 2: Division Street	Site 1: Work Center	Jail Construction	Days	425	365	182	730
Start Date	Site 3: Labounty Street	Site 2: Division Street	Site 1: Work Center	Jail Construction									
Days	425	365	182	730									
Site Factors	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing building and site development, including utility service in place - Proximity to Anne Deacon creates a BH campus environment 	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to design building for BH use to bring in natural light and create a healing environment. - Existing utilities adjacent to tie into - Wooded site can be a nice context for the building and save on new landscaping - Didgwalic wellness center can stay open during construction 	<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building design is more flexible due to larger site - Building can act as a visual screen between multi-family neighbors and jail - The architecture of the BCC could be more welcoming than the jail, giving the entire campus a more positive street appeal - Didgwalic wellness center can stay open during construction 										
	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing building use is for a jail facility, which is not congruent with the BH goals of a calming and healing environment - Existing building has little landscaping with patient - Significant plumbing rework and structural upgrades at tilt up walls will be required - Didgwalic wellness center will need to be relocated during construction and potentially need permanent relocation if new BH program does not meet the needs of the Didgwalic center 	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narrow site geometry limits opportunities to shape the building - Proximity to rear of Anne Deacon and industrial building is not ideal - Necessity to mitigate wetland portion of the site 	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a protected area at the northeast corner of the site and the implications of this are unknown - Higher cost of construction due to deep foundation requirement at this site as well as additional site development - Necessity to mitigate wetland portion of the site 										





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Upcoming Decision for Council – January 27th

- Request to affirm recommendation of advisory committees for an out-of-custody model
- Request motion affirming Division Street location, pending FFAB recommendation January 22nd

Other Next Steps

- Behavioral Health Analysis - Modeling, operational costs, etc.
- Legislative Advocacy – Flexibility on Crisis Relief Center