

TACOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY EASTSIDE & HILLTOP FEASIBILITY STUDY

Final Report | September 2022



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Executive Summary

The Tacoma Public Library (TPL) used to serve the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have traditionally been, and currently are, communities color, strong in diversity and community, but with relatively limited access to resources. The Swan Creek and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) libraries were closed in 2011 as the City of Tacoma experienced fiscal challenges following the Great Recession.

This disinvestment of library services generated an immediate and continuing outcry from the Hilltop neighborhood in particular, and the formation of the Hilltop Library Planning Committee (HLPC), which exists and persists to this day. In 2019, the Tacoma Public Library Director requested and received City funds to study the best way to restore library services to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. While the study was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the result is this Feasibility Study, which is a rearticulation of the Eastside and Hilltop communities' desires for the restoration of library services, as well as the recommendations for specific facility and service options to best meet community needs.

The Eastside and Hilltop Communities

Today, the Eastside neighborhood is home to over 32,000 people dispersed across a relatively large geography. About 8% of the population currently speaks a language other than English and does not speak English proficiently. The average population is younger than the City of Tacoma and Pierce County overall, and slightly younger than the Hilltop. The Eastside has a significantly lower median household income than Tacoma and Pierce County, with nearly 30% of Eastside households making less than \$35,000 per year and about 19% of households below the poverty level.

The Eastside has limited connectivity and infrastructure, with the subarea divided by railroad tracks and served by limited bicycle and transit infrastructure along major corridors. Additionally, there are significant gaps in the Eastside sidewalk network, limiting active transportation mobility. These mobility challenges and the lack of a single center of the Eastside are defining characteristics of the neighborhood that have significant impact on where best to locate library and other community services.

The Eastside is currently served by TPL's Mottet and Moore libraries, though Moore sits just outside the neighborhood boundary. At 5,024 sq ft (the second smallest in the TPL system), Mottet holds 4% of system collection and contributes 5% of overall circulation. The building is on a quiet residential street and not directly connected to the McKinley Hill neighborhood business district, which is one block away. Moore is larger, at 15,487 sq ft, and busier, with 13% of system collection and circulation.

The Hilltop neighborhood is home to about 15,000 people located in a relatively compact geography. The neighborhood business district serves as the central hub of the neighborhood, housing many businesses and local nonprofits. About 27% of the Hilltop population identifies as Black or African American; the neighborhood is broadly viewed as a center of Tacoma's Black community. As with the Eastside, Hilltop households have incomes that are lower than those in Tacoma and Pierce County as a whole, with more than a third of Hilltop households earning less than \$35,000 per year. The annual household income in Hilltop is nearly \$10,000 less than it is in Eastside and 20% of Hilltop residents live in poverty. According to Census data, Hilltop has a significantly higher prevalence of people with disabilities compared to Eastside, Tacoma, and Pierce County overall, at 22% of the population.

Approximately 11% of the Hilltop population has a cognitive difficulty and 11% has an ambulatory difficulty.

The Hilltop subarea has comparatively robust transit and pedestrian infrastructure, as well multiple bicycle connections, particularly on the east side of the subarea near Downtown. Sound Transit is currently extending the Tacoma Link light rail system to the Hilltop subarea from Downtown, with stops along Martin Luther King Way anticipated to open in 2023. This will make access to and from Hilltop much more convenient.

With the closure of the MLK library, the Hilltop community is most directly served by the Main Library, which is located on the edge of the community, down a steep slope from the neighborhood center. The building is a hybrid comprised of a historic Carnegie Library building from the early 1900s and a 1952 addition. The Carnegie structure is home to the Northwest Room on the second floor, and a large multi-purpose room, the Olympic Room, on the first floor. The addition houses Main's public service areas and collections, staff offices, storage, and other back-office functions. During the pandemic, public services space on the second floor was converted to house community-based organizations, with the space administered by TPL.

While 54% of Hilltop and 14% of Eastside survey respondents report using Main frequently, the building is generally underutilized relative to the share of TPL resources it holds: at 95,727 square feet, Main has 59% of library system square footage and 40% of system's total collections but contributes only 13% of overall circulation. Low use of the Main Library is attributable to several challenges related to the location and the building itself. The location is relatively inaccessible by transit, bike, or foot, with limited parking. In community engagement activities, participants noted that the steep slope creates access challenges for residents and that the proximity to the Pierce County Jail and Courthouse creates a perception of unsafe street conditions.

The building is dated and poorly suited to contemporary library services such as community meeting spaces and adaptable room configurations. It is seen by engagement participants as cold, uninviting, and uninspiring. From an operational point of view, it is poorly suited for the back-office functions that occur in the basement, including the unergonomic manual work of materials circulation. Staff workspaces are fairly described as dark and dreary. The building systems are old and inefficient but modernizing them or separating the two parts of the building would be difficult and expensive, as the elevator and HVAC systems are located in the 1952 Addition but serve the Carnegie building as well. Moreover, the Northwest Room, which is housed in the Carnegie building, relies on access to historic documents stored in the ideal conditions of the Addition basement.

While the Main Library comes with many challenges, the building has value on several dimensions and abandoning it is undesirable for a variety of reasons:

- The Carnegie Building is important to the community for its historical value.
- The Northwest Room, which is appropriately housed in a historic building, benefits from proximity to the basement of the 1952 Addition, which has conditions well-suited for document storage.
- Population projections show that Downtown population is expected to increase in the coming decades, potentially increasing the need for library services in the vicinity.

Given these factors, it is desirable to invest in and activate Main in the short-term, retaining the option to expand library operations over the long term.

Recommended Options for Serving the Eastside and Hilltop Communities

The Feasibility Study established an Evaluative Framework with the following criteria to consider various options for restoring library services to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods.



- **City Values and Community Benefits**, including alignment with City plans and policies, ability to realize community vision, and opportunity for neighborhood and economic benefits.
- **Impact on Library Services**, including the Main Library and Northwest Room.
- **Location and Accessibility**, considering population projections in the service area; safe multimodal; and development feasibility.
- **Financial Feasibility**, considering capital and operating costs.

Substantial community engagement was used to hear directly from neighborhood residents and ground the study in a firsthand understanding of community desires for library buildings and library services. This engagement was conducted both from September 2021 through June 2022. The study team deployed a mix of passive outreach and active engagement, including online surveys; engagements hosted by Community Partners; stakeholder interviews; visioning workshops; intercepts; listening sessions; and comments received via email. Two rounds of surveys engaged over 2,000 and over 400 respondents in the Autumn and Spring rounds, respectively. Engagement facilitated by trusted local partners connected with Eastside and Hilltop community members who were the least likely to take an online survey, including youth, those experiencing housing instability and/or food insecurity, and communities historically marginalized by government. These partners reached over 800 people in the Autumn round and over 400 in the Spring round.

Common themes identified through these engagement efforts include the following:

- **Community investment.** A library is an important investment in social infrastructure that both symbolizes that the community is valued and promotes civic pride, public safety, and community prosperity and well-being.
- **Safe and supportive spaces.** A library should be a space where everyone is welcome, especially young people. It should be a place that is designed by and for the community served.
- **Access to resources.** A library is a place to connect to other community resources and can provide tools to do so (e.g., computer labs, printing, and copying). Unlike other government offices and institutions, it is a judgment-free hub. It preserves culture and community history through collections and services that are delivered in-languages that reflect the makeup of the community.
- **Community connections.** The library is a “third space” after home and work or school to meet friends or spend time with family, hold events, and otherwise bring people together. It is a multi-generational space with something for everyone, so that all ages can enjoy its benefits.

Alternative Service Delivery Models and Co-Location Opportunities

Libraries across the county are experimenting with alternative service delivery options that enhance access to library resources and services in a low-capital and low-cost manner. Based on community input and consideration of additional factors listed in our Evaluative Framework, we find that:

- Express libraries, kiosks or lockers, and mobile services do not meet community desires for neighborhood-based spaces for access to library services and community gathering places.
- They are reasonable supplements but should not be relied upon for core service delivery.

Co-locating libraries with other uses is a common and advantageous practice that can produce multiple benefits. This includes shared spaces, with lower capital and operating costs; dynamic partnering and service delivery that meets multiple needs in a single place; greater community and economic benefit from increased traffic: place-making, safety, and support for local businesses; and support for smaller organizations and businesses. As TPL and the City of Tacoma pursue investment in library services in the Eastside and Hilltop communities, we recommend consideration of co-location opportunities adjacent to or on school properties; with community-based organizations; with public, not-for-profit, and for-profit housing; and with parks and recreation providers. We do not recommend co-location within schools or with fire stations given operational conflicts with these uses.

Eastside Vision and Recommendations

The summary Vision that emerged from engagement of Eastside community members was to “**Celebrate and convene the assets of the Eastside’s diverse communities.**” Key elements of this Vision include:

- Investment in brick-and-mortar branches or other physical locations.
- Prioritization of walkability and access to transit.
- Community gathering and community building space.
- Spacious, accessible, warm, and inviting spaces with comfortable chairs, and art reflective of Eastside cultural diversity.
- Access to business services.

“A place that eliminates barriers between cultures and sustains our language and culture to share with others”

Desired spaces include:

- Spaces to meet, study, and share audio and video.
- Play area for children.
- A café.

Feasibility Study Recommendations

We see that the community’s preferred option—two new libraries, in addition to retaining to Mottet and Moore—is cost-prohibitive. Instead, our recommendation is to invest in existing assets (Mottet and Moore) and add a single new library:

- **Open a new branch library along Portland Ave.** Create a community-based neighborhood library for children, teens, and adults with flexible spaces to accommodate public gatherings.

- **Implement an interior renovation at Mottet.** Update the building and create space for meetings, readings, and other events.

A somewhat lower-cost alternative would be to build a smaller “Phase 1” facility on the Eastside with a focus on meeting space and access to technology and collections. This initial investment would be designed with the idea that it could be expanded in the future as the neighborhood population grows.

The following options were rejected as insufficient or impractical ways of restoring library services to the Eastside community:

- **Update and expand Mottet only, OR, Add a new library on Portland Avenue and close Mottet.** Neither option provides sufficient access to libraries for the Eastside community. The difficulty in getting around the Eastside makes it important to have multiple library service points.
- **Close Mottet.** The desire is to augment, not diminish, access to library services. Future population increases around Mottet warrant retaining and investing in this existing asset.
- **Add two branches.** This option would generate significant capital and operating costs and is out of scale with investments in other neighborhoods.

Eastside Location

Given current and projected population density and the location of the Mottet and Moore libraries, our recommendation is to locate a new Eastside library along Portland Avenue, near, but not within, the Salishan campus. While there is an otherwise suitable site within the interior of the Salishan property, feedback from participants in Eastside community engagement activities indicates that this is undesirable for non-Salishan residents. Opportunities for new development or redevelopment of an existing building may be found along Portland Avenue. Co-location with Metro Parks Tacoma’s (MPT) former community center at Portland Avenue Park should be further explored as that site undergoes a master planning process. Considerations will include the benefits of space and resource sharing with MPT, the synergies associated with co-located services, and community feedback on the accessibility of the site.

Hilltop Vision and Recommendations

Based on direct engagement with residents, the summary Vision for library services on the Hilltop is to: **“Amplify and connect the Hilltop’s unique past, present, and future as a Black neighborhood.”** Key elements of this Vision include:

- Investment in brick-and-mortar branches or other physical locations.
- A hope for a full-service library in the core of the Neighborhood Business District – ideally at 11th Street and MLK Way.
- A library that celebrates and serves the Black community.
- Design:
 - Window seats, skylights, ADA accessibility and art by local artists.
 - Quiet, but not too quiet.
 - Connected to other nonprofits and services on Hilltop.

Desired spaces include:

- Space to celebrate and host events.
- Connections to retail and a café.
- Classrooms and meeting spaces.
- A play area.
- Youth space.
- A place to listen to audiobooks.
- An art room and place to display student writing.
- Public bathrooms.

“A standard library like other areas of the city.”

“A library that is the “beating heart of the Hilltop.”

“Let’s serve the core group we are trying to keep.”

Feasibility Study Recommendations

It is important to note that our recommendation differs from what we heard directly from members of the Hilltop community, who generally expressed an interest in securing a strong library for their neighborhood. Our recommendation is to create a larger facility than what the neighborhood asked for, and that it be designed to reflect and serve that community exceedingly well, as well as provide accessible library resources for the broader Tacoma community, who also deserve an updated central library.

- **Open a significant flagship library on the Hilltop.** This would serve as the system’s new large library, with a proportionally large collections and expert public services. It would be designed to reflect the local community, with dedicated space for an African American collection and would be more accessible than the current Main and an improvement to its dated and dysfunctional physical form . Ideally, it would be located in the core Neighborhood Business District, at 11th Street and MLK Way, and likely co-located with planned development.
- **Renovate the Carnegie Building.** Make this investment to meet storage needs of the Northwest Room collections and modernize public programming options. Retain archival document storage in the Addition’s basement.
- **Locate an Express Library on the first floor of the Addition and convert the remaining spaces on floors one and two to a “civic hub” with Library, City, and not-for-profit offices.** Bring the Library’s staffing functions up from the basement. Expand public services space if warranted by future population growth.

If a large new Main library cannot be located on the Hilltop, establish a branch library, likely also co-located with housing or other uses. Renovate Main, retain and consolidate public services to the first floor and convert the second floor to civic offices, including the Library’s non-public services functions that would be moved out of the basement. Renovate the Carnegie Building.

The following options were rejected:

- **Close Main entirely.** The desire is to augment, not diminish, access to library services. Future population increases in the Downtown may warrant expansion of services.

- **Serve Hilltop with an Express Library.** This option does not meet community vision for gathering spaces.
- **Relocate the Northwest Room, and all of Main's public services, to the Hilltop neighborhood.** Space is constrained on the Hilltop and the Library's full departure from the Main Library and Carnegie Building would be undesirable.

Hilltop Location

It is important to both add a service point within or near the Hilltop Neighborhood Business District and to retain library presence at the site of the Main Library. No conversations have been held with current property owners and inclusion of named locations in the list below does not presuppose that these sites are feasible locations. Some of these locations have been suggested by community engagement participants or members of the Project Advisory Committee based on their observations of what might be possible or desirable.

- **Co-location with multifamily housing** is seen as highly desirable. A number of projects are underway currently, at varying points of entitlement or development. Exploratory conversations with nonprofit developers identified a strong interest among some for including a library within their projects as the foot traffic and amenities offered by a library are seen as attractive, supporting both community vitality and project feasibility. Considerations for further exploration include design and space, development terms, and timing.
- The **People's Community Center** is owned by the City of Tacoma and operated by Metro Parks Tacoma. There is a desire to rebuild the existing building, which is both dated and cramped. Further consideration of locating the library on the same property or on adjacent parcels, which include residential properties, a church, a Masonic Temple, parking for Saint Joseph's Medical Center, and a Tacoma Police substation, is warranted.
- Co-location with or redevelopment of the **Asberry House, AME Renaissance Center, or Safeway** sites were ideas raised by community stakeholders. As the Safeway is the only grocery store serving the Hilltop neighborhood, co-location would be desirable, with the library sharing a redeveloped site with a more modern grocery store and other smaller retailers or service providers.

Implementation

Capital and operating cost estimates for our Recommended Option are described below. While we anticipate that some portion of the expanded operations and capital investments envisioned in this study will be covered by City general fund and capital program resources, we foresee the likely need to identify additional revenue sources given the fiscal constraints facing the City

Capital Costs and Funding Options

Capital costs are one-time costs that include acquisition of property (where applicable), construction and renovation costs, opening day collection materials, and addressing deferred maintenance in the case of existing buildings. The total estimated capital costs for the Recommended Option are **\$62.6 million** as shown in Exhibit 25.

Potential Funding Sources

- Capital bond financing, likely funded through a property tax increase.
- State and federal grants or direct appropriations.
- Individual giving and philanthropy through a capital campaign.

Operating Costs and Funding Options

Ongoing, annual operating costs include additional building and central staff, maintenance, operations, and (where applicable) lease costs. The estimated annual operating increase in operating costs associated with the Recommended Option is **\$4.0 million** as shown in Exhibit 25.

Potential Funding Sources

- Additional share of City dollars, likely General Fund.
- Operating levy.
- Grants and philanthropy for supplementary, not core, services.

Community Input

83% of respondents support leveraging individual giving and philanthropy, 77% support issuing voter-approved capital bonds, and 74% support a voter-approved operating levy. Survey respondents are not interested in closing existing libraries to fund new facilities:

- 50% of respondents (51% of Hilltop residents) opposed reducing Main to the Northwest Room and an Express Library.
- 74% of respondents (75% of Hilltop residents) opposed closing Main.
- 78% of respondents (87% of Eastside residents) opposed closing Mottet to fund additional library access.

Stakeholder Input

BERK held exploratory conversations with several stakeholders from Tacoma's philanthropic community, which is relatively small and interconnected, comprised of a handful of funders and foundations interested in specific causes and in making investments to strengthen the Tacoma community in general. The individuals we spoke with were excited at the prospect of partnering for investment in 21st Century libraries in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods with physical space for co-location and activations with community-based partners. They thought the idea would resonate with others as well, and encouraged building a robust partnership or "collective impact" approach, rather than thinking of the Library as "core" and philanthropy and community-based partners as "supplementary." They felt this would be compelling to local philanthropists because the idea resonates as restorative justice and as an opportunity to protect against gentrification by investing in equity and access. They noted that physical spaces are needed in these neighborhoods to support community interaction and access to services, describing libraries as "pillars" or "centers" of the community and would be natural platforms for library- and partner-driven services related to education, the arts, and other topics of interest.

Conclusions and Recommended Next Steps

Tacoma's Eastside and Hilltop communities strongly desire the restoration of library services in the form of neighborhood-based facilities designed for the 21st Century. The importance of this investment is about more than access to library services: it is also about the equitable investment in municipal services by the City of Tacoma and it is about providing equitable access to information and social infrastructure for two of Tacoma's historically under-resourced neighborhoods.

In addition to these considerations specific to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods, Tacoma residents citywide deserve investment in the system's largest library. The current Main Library is poorly located and ill-suited to provide contemporary library services.

As this Feasibility Study concludes, community interest is high, and it will be important to move quickly to secure the capital and operating funding needed to meet the visions established through this process. Development in the Hilltop Neighborhood Business District is progressing rapidly, with projects active in different phases of planning, tenanting, and construction. We recommend that TPL and the City of Tacoma move quickly to assess specific options to locate a library in the Hilltop neighborhood and secure space. This will likely need to happen more rapidly than the process required to secure capital funding for the full Recommended Option as identified in this report. We recommend that the City find other funding to secure space while this longer process unfolds.

Additional next steps include:

- Securing full capital and operating funding.
- Further exploring co-location opportunities with public and not-for-profit partners.
- Engaging the local philanthropic community, as well as individual donors, in establishing a shared vision of the role libraries can play to support and elevate the Tacoma community.

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Introduction

From the late 1980s until 2011, the Tacoma Public Library's Swan Creek library and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) library served the Tacoma communities of the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. These libraries were core to each community, offering a range of services, classes and trainings, technologies, and community meeting spaces. However, in response to ongoing budget pressures that the City of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Library (TPL) faced as the result of the Great Recession, the two libraries were closed in 2011, greatly reducing library access for residents of these neighborhoods.

The practical impact and symbolic meaning of this disinvestment in these two historically under-resourced neighborhoods with high BIPOC populations cannot be overstated. The library closures were a significant loss to the communities there, specifically the Black/African American community in the Hilltop neighborhood and the Latinx community in the Eastside neighborhood. One former Swan Creek patron who relied on the library's computers to start his own business (which went on to employ 11 people) said of the closure, "I have to credit the library. It helped me start my business. I can probably invest in my own computer now, but a lot of kids and people like me will miss it. That library, it was making a huge difference in everyday life."¹

The City of Tacoma and the Tacoma Public Library are now investing in an effort engage the communities of Eastside and Hilltop and identify options to restore library services that live up to community expectations and to the City's stated values. The first step in this effort is this Feasibility Study, which includes substantial community engagement efforts to understand current neighborhood needs and desires for library services.

Focus of this Feasibility Study

This study is focused on the Tacoma's Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods (as identified in Exhibit 1 and was designed to answer two key questions:

- ***What is the community interest in and vision for library services in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods?***
- ***How should the Main Library be considered in fulfilling this community vision?***

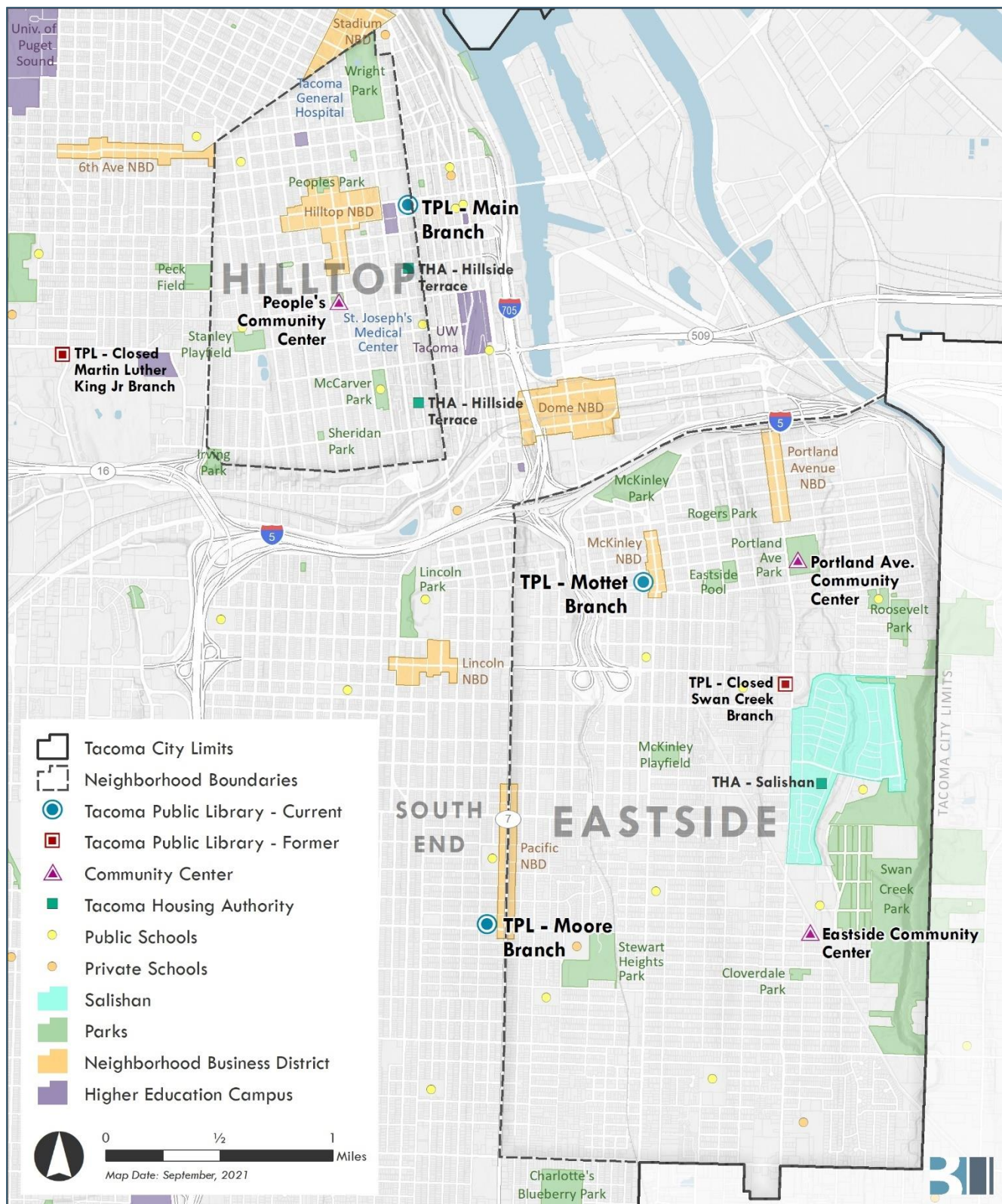
Given the history of disinvestment in these neighborhoods, the City of Tacoma has expressed a desire to focus on meeting their respective needs. Both neighborhoods are more diverse, and less wealthy, than most of Tacoma or Pierce County as a whole. Therefore, this opportunity to restore access to library services and the individual social, economic, and community benefits they provide is deeply anchored in issues around equity and social justice.

BERK's demographic analysis finds that the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods are **younger and more diverse** than Tacoma and Pierce County overall. On the Eastside, about 8% of the population speaks at least one language other than English and does not speak English proficiently. In both neighborhoods, **median household income is lower** than in Tacoma and Pierce County overall. Roughly 20% of households in each neighborhood live in poverty – also more than Tacoma and Pierce County overall. The annual income in Hilltop is nearly \$10,000 less than it is in Eastside. Approximately 11% of the Hilltop

¹ Kame, Lewis "Library to serve fewer," Tacoma News Tribune, January 16, 2011.

population has a cognitive difficulty, and 11% has an ambulatory difficulty; also proportions higher than in Tacoma or Pierce County overall.

Exhibit 1. The Eastside and Hilltop Neighborhoods



Source: BERK, 2022.

From an urban development perspective, both neighborhoods have meaningful assets as well as significant deficits. Both feature some open and built assets that provide shared community spaces, but both would benefit from additional public investment.

The Hilltop neighborhood is relatively compact and centered around a defined core. It is relatively well served by transit and is navigable by foot or bike. In contrast, the Eastside is significantly larger, without a defined center, and more difficult to navigate. Contextual transportation analysis is provided for each neighborhood on the pages that follow, as well as in the **Baseline Situation Assessment Appendix**.

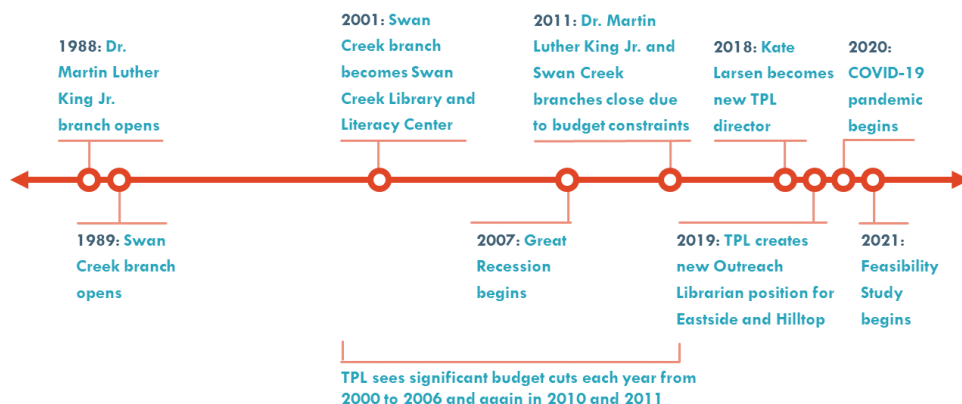
The Main Library is included in this study's analysis for several reasons. With the closure of the MLK library, the Main Library is now the closest library to the Hilltop, with 54% of neighborhood survey respondents reporting that they currently use the Main Library. The building saw its last major remodel in 1988 and is underutilized relative to size. Additional consideration of the current conditions at Main are provided on page 37.

Library System Context and History

The TPL system includes a Main Library and seven neighborhood and regional libraries. Prior to the pandemic, all TPL facilities were operating on a lean 40 hour a week schedule, open Tuesday through Saturday and closed Sunday and Monday. This is a suboptimal level of service, with most well-funded library systems open substantially more days and hours. According to self-reported data in the Washington Public Library Statistics (2020), among peer and neighboring library systems, only Timberland Regional Library offers fewer average operating hours at its branches than TPL. All other systems, including Kitsap Regional Library, King County Library System, Pierce County Library System, Seattle Public Library, Sno-Isle Libraries, and Spokane County Library District, offer more average weekly operating hours.

Additionally, the TPL's facilities are generally old and have not been updated to accommodate contemporary public library uses and user needs. For example, spaces for individual study, small group work, larger community meetings, early childhood education centers, teen media labs, and content creation spaces are all part of 21st Century public library features that are largely lacking in TPL's current facilities. Fern Hill, the newest library, was built in 1989, which was also the year of the most recent structural remodels across the system. Exhibit 2 shows a timeline from the opening of the MLK and Swan Creek libraries up until the start of this study.

Exhibit 2. Timeline



Sources: TPL, 2021; BERK, 2021.

History of the Swan Creek Library Branch

An ambitious \$15.8 million library bond that voters passed in 1984 made renovations across the system possible and funded new construction of two libraries. The Swan Creek Library served the Eastside community from 1989 through 2011. Located at the intersection of East 38th Street and Portland Avenue East, the branch served a part of Tacoma previously underserved by the library system. Swan Creek opened to the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 20, 1989. The library featured community meeting rooms, adult basic-education materials, and a collection of books in Southeast Asian languages.

By the early 2000s, budget shortfalls necessitated a reimagining of library services in branches that had lower material circulation numbers, including Swan Creek. In May 2001, TPL turned the branch into a “magnet library” by reducing the collection and partnering with Tacoma Community House to provide services and support through a shared staffing model. Under the new model, the branch was renamed the Swan Creek Library and Literacy Center and increased its weekly operating hours from 45 to 66 hours. By early 2002, the branch drew 10,000 visitors per month compared to 3,400 before

Exhibit 3. Scenes from the Swan Creek Branch



Source: Tacoma News Tribune, 2011.

the partnership began.² The partnership was one of ten Finalists for the 2002 Mutual of American Community Partnership Award and continued for the next decade.³

In addition to providing “traditional library services” such as books, magazines, and reference support, Tacoma Community House offered a range of classes and training opportunities, especially for community members with limited or no English proficiency. Through a donation from the Junior League of Tacoma and staffing support from AmeriCorps, a new computer lab was also established in the branch. Despite the success of the partnership program, budget cuts persisted and only intensified following the 2008 financial crisis. Facing rising operational costs, costly deferred maintenance and capital repair needs, as well as low circulation statistics and a small collection size, the branch was closed in 2011 along with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Branch. The property was sold by the City of Tacoma in early 2013.

² Dunham, Sandy. “Swan Creek Library is ‘magnet for community,” Tacoma News Tribune, January 30, 2002.

³ Merryman, Kathleen. “Swan Creek Library, Community House honored for joint literacy project,” Tacoma News Tribune, August 12, 2002.

Hilltop: History of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library Branch

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Branch served the community of Hilltop from 1988 through 2011 from its location at the intersection of South 19th and South Cedar streets. The branch was made possible by the \$15.8 million library bond that Tacoma voters passed in 1984. The Library Board chose the name for the branch in October of 1986 after public commentary, and groundbreaking took place on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1987.⁴ Governor Booth Gardner memorialized King to a cheering audience of 500, which included many members of the local Black community.⁵ The library opened November 7, 1988, and dedication took place on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1989.

Despite its role in the community, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Branch (MLK Branch) was often threatened by the library system's budget challenges. As soon as 1991, TPL reduced the branch's operating hours,⁶ and in 1992 branch closure loomed until City Council restored funding.⁷ The impact of state Initiative 747 in 2001 led the City into deeper budget troubles, and the MLK Branch was targeted once again.⁸ The property's valuable location on a busy intersection adjacent to growing medical facilities and the Library Board's view that the branch was disconnected from its neighborhood contributed to its demise.⁹ By 2011, the branch faced almost half a million dollars in deferred maintenance. TPL shuttered the branch along with the Swan Creek Branch in 2011 and the City of Tacoma sold the property in June of 2012.¹⁰

The Hilltop Library Planning Committee (HLPC), a grass-roots interest group, was subsequently formed in 2012 to advocate for restoring library services on the Hilltop. In 2014 they conducted significant

Exhibit 4. Scenes from the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Branch



Sources: TPL, 2021; Tacoma News Tribune, 2002.

⁴ Tacoma News Tribune. 10/21/1986. "Names selected for 2 new library branches."

⁵ Tacoma News Tribune. 01/19/1987. "Crowd cheers the beginning of King Library branch."

⁶ Tacoma News Tribune. 10/25/1991. "Budget forces cuts in library services, staff."

⁷ Tacoma News Tribune. 11/04/1992. "Firefighters, police take to airwaves to halt cuts."

⁸ Tacoma News Tribune. 10/20/2002. "Tacoma Library's budget pain is just the beginning."

⁹ Tacoma Weekly. 11/30/2006. "Library board examining future of MLK branch."

¹⁰ Matthews, Todd. "Tacoma sells shuttered MLK library branch." Tacoma Daily Index, June 28, 2012.

community engagement , in the form of four community cafes attended by more than 120 individuals. The engagement demonstrated persistent, significant interest in reestablishing a physical library space with a focus on the arts and culturally relevant, multi-generational programming. HLPC remains active today, and the ongoing advocacy of the Hilltop Library Planning Committee is credited with maintaining a focus on this issue and contributing to stakeholder support for funding this Feasibility Study.

Exhibit 5. Graphic Recording from Hilltop Library Planning Committee Strategic Planning, 2014



Source: Hilltop Library Planning Committee, 2014.

Structure of this Report

The following chapter provides context about best practices in libraries today, including the role they play in the community. As we consider the future of libraries in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods, or in Tacoma overall, it is important to be grounded in what libraries can and should be.

Our evaluative framework is introduced in the next chapter, describing the factors we used to assess different options and develop our recommendations.

The next three chapters present our recommendations for **alternative service models (as opposed to traditional service models) and co-location opportunities**, as well as **Eastside- and Hilltop-specific recommendations**.

The report closes with **costs and options to fund them**, as well as recommended **phasing and next steps**.

The Future of the Public Library: Risk and Reinvention

The Continuing Evolution of the 21st Century Library

Public libraries are in a period of evolution and reinvention. While many fundamental values and services remain constant, public libraries are taking a hard look at what they do and how they move into the future. The evolution happening now was spurred by the advent of the Internet in the 1990s. The COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing wealth and resource gap facing American communities have also been challenges. While this is a period of risk for libraries, it is also rich with opportunity as libraries evolve from book-centric institutions focused on collecting to people-centric institutions focused on creativity and discovery. Now more than ever, the public library is about inspiration and creativity, engagement and community involvement, digital inclusion (bridging digital divides in technology access, learning, and mastery), building partnerships, and formal and informal learning.

This evolution has entailed embracing new technologies and shifting to new types of spaces that encourage community and collegiality. The public library has always been an ideal place for the individual to work alone, but also to experience the energy of participation in groups, small and large. A place for cultural programs and exhibitions, and a center for young people and families, the library is a public institution that is meant to welcome and serve everyone.

Because of COVID-19, libraries have adapted from serving their users in their buildings to creating and expanding services virtually. What they learn from this “overnight” shift will certainly affect how they continue to develop new services and spaces in the years ahead. How much risk to take and how fast to reinvent are two significant questions facing today’s public libraries.

As Tacoma looks to the future, it should provide library facilities that rise to the potential that contemporary, best-in-field libraries create for connecting people to resources and to other community members. Ideally, Tacoma’s libraries should be designed to:

- Provide dynamic physical spaces for community interaction and collaboration.



- Serve a key role in the social service network, providing space for training, partners, and private meetings.
- Bring together culturally significant collections available in appropriate/representative languages, in both analog and digital formats.
- Contain interior spaces that are flexible and able to adapt as services and technology evolve.
- Provide spaces for the creation and sharing of original content through digital media labs and maker spaces.
- Provide the latest technologies, for public use and library operations.
- Offer access to the virtual reality and augmented reality tools that will become increasingly important for creativity and for education.
- Encourage literacy and learning through services, both traditional and innovative.
- Support business and career success through resources and collaborative spaces.
- Become active in residents' daily lives, in which people connect with one another and work collaboratively, as well as individually.



Stand-Alone or Co-Located Libraries?

There is rising interest in the potential of co-locating public libraries with other entities, to create effective and cost-efficient service hubs . Co-location can include sharing a building, sharing a “campus,” or being located adjacent to another entity. TPL has a precedent of co-location, including a partnership with Tacoma Community House at the former Swan Creek location, as well as an experiment with schools and an ongoing co-location with a fire station.

Co-located with schools. Co-location with public schools was more popular several decades ago when some public libraries and school libraries shared space in elementary, middle, or high schools. Originally conceived as a way to combine the scarce resources of school libraries with public library resources, these joint facilities worked best in more rural locations where library resources were lacking. Among the issues cited for lack of success in urban areas are the different missions of a school and public library, the security issues with having the public enter a school facility, and the vastly different nature of school and public library collections. As the result of these barriers to service, this option is becoming increasingly unpopular.

Co-located with higher education. Several public libraries have opened in joint facilities on higher education campuses. The San Jose Public Library’s Martin Luther King Library is a public library and university library located in downtown San Jose, California. The different floors in the large 475,000

square foot building are allocated to either the public library function or to the students at San Jose State University. There are also shared resources and services.

Co-located with public housing. The Chicago Public Library and Chicago Housing Authority, for example, have partnered on several City-owned facilities that incorporate the public library into public housing. Two of the housing complexes are senior housing that have seen some success¹¹.

The Seattle Public Library has also co-located branches with housing using library bond funds that cover the capital expenses of the library's shares of the buildings.

Co-located with private developments. The Milwaukee Public Library has been in the forefront of working with private developers to build and co-locate libraries.

- The Mitchell Street Branch is the largest of Milwaukee Public Library's branch libraries. It is part of a historic restoration and redevelopment of the five-story Hill's Building, which was once home to a department store of the same name. This mixed-use facility also includes 60 apartment units, eight of which are townhouse units. The library branch is 23,000 square feet spread across three floors.
- The Mill Road/Good Hope Branch is a 18,400 square-foot building that includes a community room, interactive children's space, and a makerspace. The development includes 65 apartments consisting of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units affordable at multiple income levels.
- The system's Martin Luther King Branch is being redeveloped as part of a mixed-use apartment project to replace the current building. The developers were awarded tax credits to finance the apartment project.

Co-located with other governmental services. Many public libraries are situated close to or in an adjacent and/or shared space with government offices and public service centers. Libraries have also been located in parks, sharing space with recreation centers and, in some cases, aquatic centers. Shared meeting spaces, restrooms, foyers, and other amenities can be used by each entity and the populations they serve, leading to greater efficiency of resources. Seattle Public Library's Ballard Branch shares space with the Ballard Customer Service Center. Visitors can pay utility bills, acquire employment information, discuss energy savings, and pick up forms related to voter registration, passports, and business licenses.

Co-located with nonprofit institutions. A new trend has emerged in which public libraries co-locate into new spaces that are shared with nonprofit institutions. The recently opened new Main Library of the Missoula Public Library in Montana is an outstanding example of how this model can work best to serve the public and nonprofit sectors. The main floor offers a marketplace with a café; retail store; new library materials and the audiovisual collection; a makerspace; MCAT's high tech production studio, equipment check-out services, and sound booths; a teens' area; and the University of Montana Living Lab. Focused on children, families, and play, the second floor houses the Hank and Nancy Harrington Children's Library, Families First Learning Lab, University of Montana SpectrUM Discovery Area, and a mix of collaborative learning spaces shared by partner organizations. The third floor includes a demonstration kitchen, reference services, fiction and nonfiction collections, a business center, and genealogy center. The top floor provides spaces for public engagement and gathering, as well as access to an exterior patio.

¹¹ <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/collaborating-on-co-locating-chicagos-innovative-approach-to-mixed-use-fa/548379/>

Evaluative Framework

This section describes the four interrelated evaluative criteria and their subcomponents shown in Exhibit 6. These criteria were used to assess different options for meeting community desires for libraries in the Eastside and Hilltop communities. Each is expanded upon in the following pages.

Exhibit 6. Evaluative Framework



- [City Values and Community Benefits](#) includes alignment with City plans, ability to realize community vision, and opportunity for community and economic benefits.
- [Impact on Library Services](#) includes ramifications for the Main Library and Northwest Room.
- [Location and Accessibility](#) considers population projections in the service area; safe multimodal access; and development feasibility.
- [Financial Feasibility](#) considers capital and operating costs.

Source: BERK, 2022.



City Values & Community Benefits

City of Tacoma Values

The City of Tacoma has established multiple planning documents and assessments that help articulate community values and guide City actions and investments. These documents are reviewed in more detail in the **Baseline Situation Assessment Appendix**.

Tacoma 2025 Citywide Strategic Plan and Vision

The [Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan](#), adopted by Council in 2015, represents Tacoma's community vision for the future, and is guided by four Core Values: Opportunity, Equity, Partnerships, and Accountability. Following adoption of the Strategic Plan, community priorities were synthesized by the Tacoma 2025 Advisory Committee into the following five Key Focus Areas. Underlined sections are annotated to describe how they factored into our assessment of options.

- **Livability.** Tacoma residents have opportunities and amenities such as connected neighborhoods, accessible and efficient transportation options, and vibrant arts and culture while maintaining affordability.
- **Economy/Workforce.** Tacoma residents can find livable wage jobs in key industry areas. Tacoma will be a place of choice for employers, professionals, and new graduates.
- **Education.** Tacoma leads the region in education for youth and adults by producing more graduates from high school and college, linking residents to employment in the region, and investing in lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Civic Engagement.** Tacoma residents are engaged participants in making Tacoma a well-run city. Elected and volunteer leadership of the city reflects the diversity of the city and residents fully participate in community decision making.
- **Equity and Accessibility.** All residents are treated equitably and have access to services, facilities, and financial stability.

Libraries are part of the Tacoma community's network of amenities.

Libraries should facilitate learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Access to libraries should be equitably (not equally) distributed based on community resources and needs.

Tacoma Equity and Empowerment Framework

The [Equity and Empowerment Framework](#) was adopted by City Council in 2014, and includes five Goals that guide all efforts throughout the City of Tacoma and Office of Equity and Human Rights. These five Goals are annotated below to show how underlined sections inform our assessment of options:

- The City of Tacoma Workforce Reflects the Community it Serves.
- Purposeful Community Outreach and Engagement.
- Equitable Service Delivery to Residents and Visitors.

Recommendations should respect community input.

- Support Human Rights and Opportunities for Everyone to Achieve their Full Potential.
- Commitment to Equity in Policy Decision Making.

Access to libraries should be equitably (not equally) distributed based on community resources and needs.

Equity Index

The [Equity Index](#) is a tool used by City staff and other relevant stakeholders who work with Tacoma communities. The Equity Index provides data for the City of Tacoma, and Pierce County overall focused on key indicators related to equity.

The Index uses 29 data points sorted into five categories that identify where community members are not able to access services, or where services may be provided but do not meet community needs. The five determinant categories are as follows. The starred characteristics (*) indicate those that help to determine an equity index score:

- Accessibility.*
- Economy.*
- Education.*
- Environmental Health.
- Livability.*

The tool supports filtering by the “Eastside Neighborhood Council” and “Hilltop Business District,” both of which receive a “Very Low” overall Equity Index score.

Ability to Realize the Community Vision

The ability to achieve the community vision and desires for library services as articulated in our engagement activities is a criterion of the utmost importance. The community engagement process is summarized briefly on page 22. Common themes are presented on page 23, with Eastside-specific visions and desires summarized on page 30 and Hilltop-specific visions and desires presented on page 38. Additional detail on process and input received are contained in the **Community Engagement Summary Appendix**.

Neighborhood and Economic Benefits

In his book *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* Eric Klinenberg defines social infrastructure:

Social infrastructure is not "social capital"—a concept commonly used to measure people's relationships and interpersonal networks—but the physical conditions that determine whether social capital develops. When social infrastructure is robust, it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbors; when degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves. Social infrastructure is crucially important, because local, face-to-face interactions—at the school, the playground, and the corner diner—are the building blocks of all public life. *People forge bonds in places that have healthy social infrastructures—not because they set out to build community, but because when people engage in*

*sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow.*¹² (page 5) [emphasis ours]

He goes on to describe the public library as “among the most critical forms of social infrastructure that we have” (page 32). Libraries are ideally suited to this role as they offer a unique combination of space, resources, and skilled staff. They have adapted to the contemporary need for social space by providing places for after-school activities like games, team projects, and tutoring; financial, real-estate, and retirement workshops; both handcraft and technology-enabled maker spaces.

As social infrastructure, libraries enrich neighborhoods by serving as public spaces, places for social interaction, and positive stimulants for public safety and economic vitality.

- **Libraries as public spaces.** Public libraries are extensions of a neighborhood’s public realm, which is also composed of its sidewalks, streets, and parks. As with other public spaces, libraries represent investments in community character and identity that can help build community and a sense of pride. Like other public spaces, libraries offer places to meet that require neither admission fees nor business transactions. This means they are ideal places for those seeking a safe and welcoming place to go after school, to get out of the elements, to hold a formal meeting or casually meet with others, or to “be alone with others” and quietly read.
- **Libraries as places for social interaction.** The inviting, flexible spaces and range of activities supported by the contemporary library spurs formal and informal interactions among neighbors, both familiar and new, enrich communication networks while increasing the potential for diverse sharing among generations, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and political leanings. The public library is a basic building block of democracy and the free exchange of knowledge among neighbors.
- **Libraries as stimulants for public safety and economic vitality.** The vehicular and pedestrian traffic generated by public libraries supports active street life, which is essential to a neighborhood’s safety and sense of place. Neighborhood commercial activity similarly benefits from library traffic. People often take advantage of the proximity of their neighborhood libraries to retail establishments—grocery and hardware stores, coffee shops and restaurants—as part of daily life.

Intentional library design, of both inside space and the library’s exterior intersection with the neighborhood, can amplify all of the neighborhood benefits described above, as can strategic colocation with public- or nonprofit-sector service providers.

¹² Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (Crown, 2018).

REINVESTING and RENEWING for the 21st CENTURY

A Community and Economic Benefits Study of San Francisco's Branch Library Improvement Program

In 2000, San Franciscans passed a bond measure to update and strengthen the physical structure of the City's branch libraries, approving issuance of a \$106 million bond program to build and refurbish 24 neighborhood branch libraries. This measure initiated a nearly \$200 million campaign to update, revitalize, and preserve the San Francisco Branch Library system, known as the Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP).

BERK studied the impacts and lessons of BLIP for the City and County of San Francisco Office of the Controller in 2015. We found that by investing in 21st Century libraires, San Francisco increased access to and use of library resources and services; catalyzed community investment and vitality; helped preserve historic resources; and stimulated economic activity. Using a conservative methodology that did not attempt to quantify many indirect community benefits, we estimated that:

- For every dollar invested in BLIP, San Francisco realized **a return of between \$5.19 and \$9.11.**
- The capital investments and additional operating spending associated with BLIP contributed **more than \$330 million in indirect and induced benefits** to the San Francisco economy.

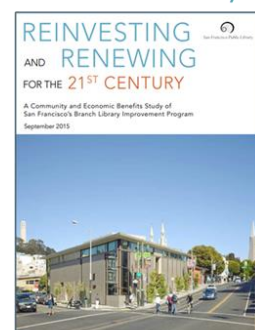
Our recommendations for future investments included the following:

- When possible, take a programmatic approach, rather than an incremental approach.
- Use partnerships to leverage complementary skills and abilities.
- Reinvent, when necessary, and build with the future in mind.
- While investing in facilities, invest in neighborhoods.
- Engage the community and deliver on promises made.
- Learn and reflect, both during and after the investment period.



For every dollar invested in BLIP, San Francisco realized a return of between **\$5.19 and \$9.11.**

The capital investments and additional operating spending associated with BLIP contributed **more than \$330 Million** in indirect and induced benefits to the San Francisco economy.



Source: <https://sfpl.org/pdf/about/commission/ReinvestingRenewing.pdf>



Impact on Library Services

Alignment with TPL Strategic Plan

The Tacoma Public Library embarked on a comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process that resulted in the [Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025](#). It incorporated a robust community engagement process and articulated a Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals that speak to the needs of residents, communitywide. In summarizing community input, the strategic plan document notes the following:

Tacoma wants spaces and resources that are accessible, welcoming, and relevant to all cultures, abilities, and communities. Inclusivity and the idea of being “radically welcoming” were common themes that we heard throughout our community engagement. Libraries are community hubs where people enjoy opportunities for individual contemplation as well as gathering with neighbors. TPL can bring people together from all segments of the community and become, as one individual envisioned, “a community living room.” Many participants focused on the importance of locating libraries in communities and neighborhoods where their services are most needed. *The closures of library branches in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods have been a significant loss and detriment to the communities there, specifically the African American community in the Hilltop and the Latinx community in the Eastside. Rebuilding trust and the commitment to make library service a priority in these neighborhoods should be given strong consideration.* [our emphasis]

The Strategic Plan’s Mission, Vision, and Values are shown below, with callouts indicating how they inform our assessment of options.

Mission. We empower our community by bringing people together to discover, connect, create, learn, and thrive.

Vision. We are radically welcoming: a trusted community hub where all people can find joy, compassion, and inspiration.

Libraries should be welcoming community spaces that facilitate human interactions.

Values

- **We work to break down barriers of access.** Our commitment to racial equity and social justice guides our work, allowing us to learn about and respond to Tacoma’s diverse communities’ needs and opportunities.
- **We believe that learning is a human right.** We work to provide free access to information and ideas from diverse points of view and encourage our community to explore new ideas, perspectives, and experiences.
- **We foster a culture of teamwork.** We engage with our community, our partners, and one another to cultivate collaboration and innovation.

Providing ease of access is a priority.

- **We are committed stewards of our human, environmental, and financial resources.** We practice equitable decision-making and resource allocation, and take an active, visible role in supporting sustainable and resilient communities.

Public services and investments should be equitable across Tacoma neighborhoods.

The Strategic Plan is organized by the following five Strategic Planning Priorities and supporting Community and Operational Goals. Again, underlines and callouts are used to annotate how these stated priorities were incorporated in our assessment of options:

- **Equity and Access.** We are committed to racial equity and social justice. It guides our work in serving Tacoma's diverse communities, especially the most vulnerable and underserved.
 - Provide convenient access to library services, resources, and programs.
 - Provide current and culturally relevant resources and services.
 - Provide spaces that welcome all cultures, abilities, and communities.
 - Provide inclusive, friendly, and expert customer service.
- **Learning, Creativity, and Innovation.** We will be the place for learning, discovery, and innovation.
 - Expand learning opportunities for the community.
 - Provide resources that optimize the potential to learn, create, and innovate.
 - Equip staff with the skills and support to meet the needs of Tacoma's diverse communities.
- **Investment in Youth.** We believe that youth are the future and we will prioritize services, programs, and partnerships that nurture and develop young minds.
 - Expand learning opportunities for youth ages 0-24.
 - Provide resources and services that address unique needs and interests of youth in our diverse communities.
 - Grow alliances with educational partners.
 - Prioritize resource allocation to support youth services.
- **Cultivate and Engage Community.** We will be the center for connecting people, ideas, and places.
 - Identify successful partners to leverage and extend library services.
 - Extend services beyond library walls by partnering with community-oriented organizations.
 - Demonstrate the role of libraries in Tacoma's thriving, multicultural communities.

Libraries should provide convenient access to all community members and reflect and respond to local communities.

Spaces should facilitate active engagement.

Proximity to schools and benefits for youth are important.

Libraries and community-based organizations should collaborate to best serve the community.

- **Responsible and Resilient.** We will be an integral partner in a sustainable network that supports a thriving Tacoma.
 - Support the Tacoma 2025 vision of equity, economy, education, livability, and civic engagement.
 - Provide services for culturally diverse and vulnerable communities.
 - Grow strong public and private support that positions the library as a model of sustainability, collaboration, and equitable practices.
 - Develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan that addresses race and social justice and focuses on serving Tacoma’s marginalized communities.

Library spaces should welcome and empower community members.

Practice environmental sustainability and social justice.

Alignment with Library Service Priorities

Evaluation of a range of facility addition and improvement options included consideration of their impact on the following service priorities:

- **Citywide access to the Main Library’s resources.** Access to the current Main Library is constrained, with limited direct transit, bike, and pedestrian connections to the site. Parking is also limited, making auto access challenging as well. Given the richness of the resources contained in the Main Library, the community would be better served with easier access to the facility.
- **Space for expanded Northwest Room programming.** TPL has received a grant to expand the role of the Northwest Room with additional programming and the collection of “current history” by capturing current residents’ life stories and experiences. Northwest Room staff are also seeking to diversify the record of Tacoma’s history and to catalog and digitize existing collections. Additional space is desired to support all these functions.
- **Appropriate and accessible storage for historic assets.** Approximately 630 cubic feet in the basement of the Main Library building hold processed records, manuscripts, and photographs that can be retrieved by Library staff for public use. There are also approximately 40 shelving ranges and 65 file cabinets which contain not-yet-processed records, manuscripts, and photographs stored in the 1952 building basement, as well as additional documents stored currently in off-site trailers. It is desirable to store these collections close to the Northwest Room.
- **Workspace that supports efficient operations and staff needs.** The basement of the Main Library is also home public services staff, who perform a variety of back-office functions. The current space is windowless, dark, uninviting, and poorly configured for efficient and ergonomic operations. It is desirable to rectify these conditions.
- **TPL is currently providing operating and programming space to community-based organizations on the second floor of the Main building.** Organizations were selected based on their value to the community and mission alignment with the Library. The experience has been beneficial to both organizations and TPL, and the Library would like to retain the ability to provide affordable leased space to such organizations going forward.



Location & Accessibility

Proximity to Population

Potential sites were assessed based on their ability to serve both current and future populations. Maps showing 2019 and forecasted 2045 population are included in the consideration of Eastside and Hilltop recommendations in the sections that follow.

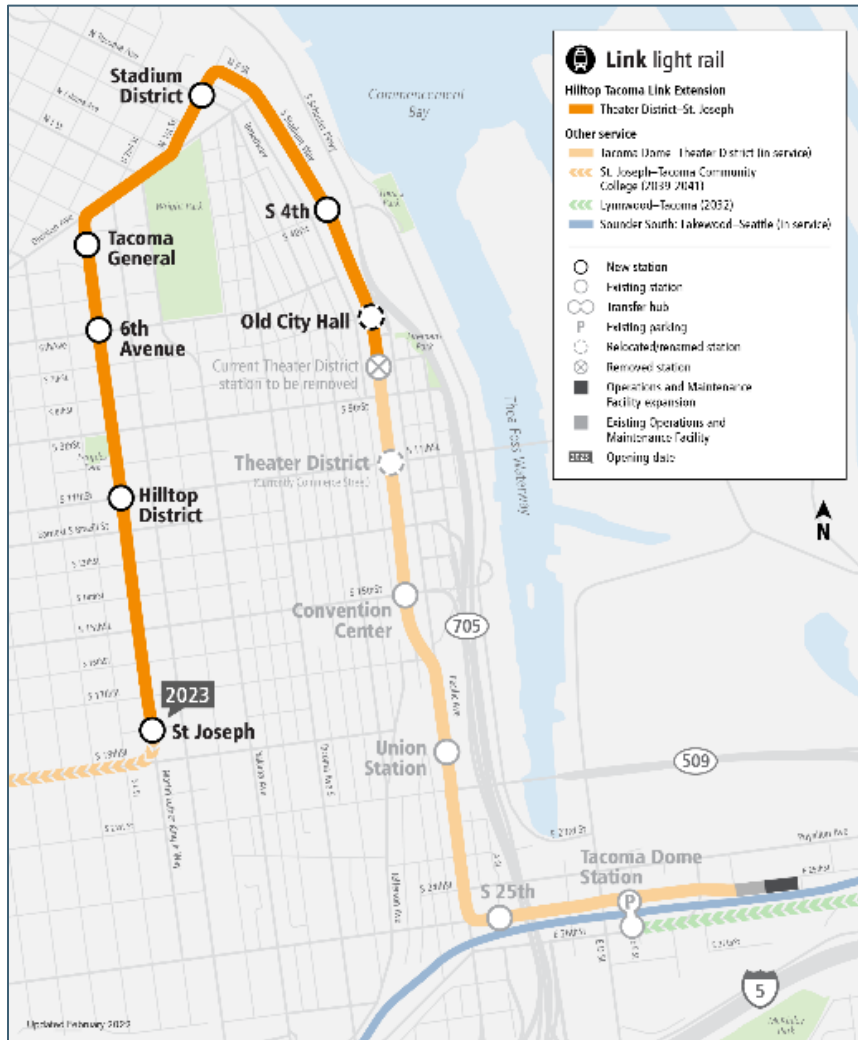
Multimodal Accessibility

It is essential that the proposed library sites facilitate access for not only for vehicles, but also for people walking, biking, and riding transit. Adequate parking facilities improve not just access but also comfort for those driving to the site. Each potential library site was scored on a scale from 1 to 5 according to the following accessibility metrics and considering both existing infrastructure serving the proposed site and planned improvements that could affect future access:

- **Vehicle:** Sites further away from arterial roads ranked lower, and higher ranks were assigned to sites within a block of arterial roads.
- **Active Transportation:** Sites with inadequate or missing sidewalks and no bike facilities were given lower rankings. Sites served by wider sidewalks, mixed-use trails, separated bike lanes, and comfortable buffers (such as planters) between active transportation and vehicle modes ranked higher.
- **Parking:** The parking metric was based on existing parking conditions. Sites that ranked higher had more available on-street parking, or well-improved off-street parking that would likely serve the potential location.
- **Transit:** Sites with no or infrequent transit service within a quarter mile were ranked lower. The highest ranks were given to sites with high-capacity light rail or bus rapid transit stops and regular service within a quarter mile.
- **Safety:** This site metric was ranked based on the quantity of safety risk factors in the immediate vicinity of the potential sites, as well as other pedestrian and traffic safety issues observed in the field. Low rankings were given to sites that felt uncomfortable to navigate as a pedestrian, would create traffic safety issues, and/or had many existing risk factors. Sites ranked higher when there were wide, buffered sidewalks, minor traffic safety concerns, and/or a low presence of existing risk factors.
- **Planned investments:** Based on the Tacoma Transportation Improvement Plan (2022-2027) as well as the most recent version of the Tacoma Transportation Master Plan (2016), any projects or planned improvements that could affect potential library sites were identified. Sites with nearby significant improvements planned or under construction ranked higher. The current effort to extend Tacoma Link

onto the Hilltop by 2023 as shown in Exhibit 7 will greatly improve access to locations along Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Exhibit 7. Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension



Source: [Sound Transit](#), 2022

Development Feasibility

This study does not consider the feasibility of individual parcels or any specific partnership opportunity. Exploratory analysis and conversations with potential partners did allow us to evaluate general options based on the aggregate availability of redevelopable properties and the presence of potential partners who might be interested in co-location opportunities. Purely exploratory conversations were held with representatives of Metro Parks Tacoma, Tacoma Housing Authority, and Tacoma Public Schools, as well as not-for-profit housing developers active on the Hilltop. All of these partners expressed interest in co-locating with a library facility and a willingness to evaluate more specific opportunities when appropriate.

Hilltop is experiencing rapid development. It will be important to secure an appropriate location for a library relatively quickly, with suitable access, space allowances, and mix of uses.



Financial Feasibility

Costs are considered both for capital investments and ongoing operations by comparing to the status quo. Methodology and key assumptions are listed below for each factor considered, with not all cost factors relevant to each option.

Capital Costs

- **Parcel acquisition.** Minimum parcel size was determined based on square footage of the proposed facility, with sufficient space set aside for parking and other uses. Assessor data was then used to identify comparable parcel costs on the Eastside. Due to a lack of available parcels, Hilltop facilities were assumed to be co-located with other uses under a leasing arrangement.
- **Construction or renovation.** The following cost assumptions were used for new construction and renovation, inclusive of predevelopment and finishing costs. Subject matter experts provided a range of recent costs; the average of each range was used to create the following construction cost factors which are used throughout this study:
 - New construction \$650/sq. ft.
 - Renovation of historic Carnegie building \$650/sq. ft.
 - Renovation of Main Addition for public services \$600/sq. ft.
 - Renovation of Main for offices \$450/sq. ft.
 - Renovation of Mottet \$500/sq. ft.
 - Tenant improvements in leased space \$325/sq. ft.
- **Opening day collection.** This includes costs for the acquisition or refreshing of the materials needed on the opening day of newly opened or renovated facilities. Ongoing material replacement cost is an operating cost (below).
- **Deferred capital investments.** Existing building deficiencies were assumed to be addressed in the above renovation costs.

Operating Costs

- **Staffing costs.** Two levels of staffing costs were estimated, both of which include salary and benefit costs:
 - **Direct staffing changes.** Staffing assumptions were made for each proposed facility based on its size. In some options, staff would be moved from one facility to another without contributing to changes to current staffing levels.

- **System-level management and administration.** The addition of new service points and corresponding public service personnel necessitates adding capacity in central management and administrative staffing.
- **Operations and maintenance.** Ongoing non-labor costs were estimated using past data on 37 cost categories that include supplies, information technology, regular maintenance, utilities, and insurance. This category also includes ongoing material replacement as part of collection management. These costs were estimated using cost drivers such as the number of computers and square footage.
- **Lease costs for Hilltop library.** An annual lease rate of \$25/sq. ft. was used based on rates for comparable spaces on Hilltop and in the surrounding community.

Cost estimates for our Recommended Option are detailed beginning on page 47.

Evaluation Framework Summary

Exhibit 8 presents a summary of the scoring framework used to evaluate different options for restoring library services to the Eastside and Hilltop communities.

Exhibit 8. Scoring Framework

Community Benefits				Location & Accessibility			Impact on Library System		Financial Feasibility		
City Values	Community Vision	Community & Economic Benefits	Population Proximity	Property Accessibility	Property Availability	TPL Strat Plan Alignment	Implications for Main	Capital Cost	Operating Cost		
<div>Key</div> <div>●○○○○○ (Fatal Shortcoming)</div> <div>●●○○○○</div> <div>●●●○○○</div> <div>●●●●○○</div> <div>●●●●●○</div> <div>●●●●●●</div>	Does not meet	Does not meet	No benefits	Low	Low	Few options	Not aligned	Negative impact	High cost	High cost	\$\$\$\$\$
	Somewhat meets	Somewhat meets	Some benefits	Medium	Moderate	Multiple options	Somewhat aligned	Neutral impact	Moderate cost	Moderate cost	\$\$\$
	Fully meets	Fully meets	Significant benefits	High	High	Many options	Fully aligned	Positive impact	Low cost	Low cost	\$

Source: BERK, 2022.

Community Input and Neighborhood Visions

Community engagement occurred throughout the study from September 2021 through June 2022. The study team deployed a mix of passive outreach and active engagement, including online surveys; engagements hosted by Community Partners (listed to the right); stakeholder interviews; visioning workshops; intercepts; listening sessions; and comments received via email. A full description of these engagements and detailed findings are available in the **Community Engagement Summary Appendix**.

Two rounds of surveys engaged over 2,000 and over 400 respondents in the Autumn and Spring rounds, respectively. Trusted local partners connected with Eastside and Hilltop community members who were the least likely to take an online survey, including: youth, those experiencing housing instability and/or food insecurity, and communities historically marginalized by government. These partners reached over 800 people in the Autumn round and over 400 in the Spring round. All partners were financially compensated for this work.

Common Themes

The top community needs and desires identified through these engagement efforts are presented below. In the following sections neighborhood-specific visions and desires are presented with the neighborhood recommendations.

- **Community investment.** A library is an important investment in social infrastructure that both symbolizes that the community is valued and promotes civic pride, public safety, and community prosperity and well-being.
- **Safe and supportive spaces.** A library should be a space where everyone is welcome, especially young people. It should be a place that is designed by and for the community served.
- **Access to resources.** A library is a place to connect to other community resources and can provide tools to do so (e.g., computer labs, printing, and copying). Unlike other government offices and institutions, it is a judgment-free hub. It preserves culture and community history through collections and services that are delivered in-languages that reflect the makeup of the community.
- **Community connections.** The library is a “third space” after home and work or school to meet friends or spend time with family, hold events, and otherwise bring people together. It is a multi-generational space with something for everyone, so that all ages can enjoy its benefits.

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Alma Villegas Consulting
- Booked with Hilltop
- Coaching with a Purpose
- Evergreen Empowerment Group
- Hilltop Action Coalition
- Hilltop Library Planning Committee
- Making a Difference Foundation/Eloise's Cooking Pot
- Metropolitan Development Council with Proyecto Mole
- New Connections Outreach
- Parable
- Sound Outreach
- Tacoma Community House
- Tacoma Urban Native Alliance/Tahoma Indian Center
- The Peace Bus
- Theresa Evans and the Eastside Little Free Libraries

Library Collections, Services, and Programming

Collections in any new library for the Eastside and Hilltop should prioritize books and resources by authors of color, and books that reflect the interests of local youth and students. Many participants described the importance of books as core to the work of the library and process of discovery. They also suggested expansion in e-books and digital collections.

Support services in the community's vision would include academic supports, healthy and culturally relevant food access, job and career supports, life skills education, and access to social services. Participants in both communities emphasized inclusion for people of all races, ages, orientations, and abilities. They would like to see accessibility and supports for people with hearing and vision impairments. Services should also include tech resources, such as public computers and workstations, laptops and other devices for checkout, printing, copying, fax, wireless hotspots, and high-speed wi-fi. The resources should be accompanied by training on technology, tech skills, and computer literacy, especially for older adults.

Programming tailored to community needs would include activities, such as art classes, hands-on science and experiential opportunities, interest groups such as book clubs, Anime club, or board games, language classes, and fitness. Both communities have large populations of young children and school-age children, so they envision ample children's and family-friendly programming, including read-aloud sessions, all-seasons programming and services for families of children with special needs including a dedicated room to read and meet other families. Both communities have a relatively higher prevalence of multi-generational households and kinship caregivers, and they would like to see programs that can engage whole families. They also highlighted the opportunity to program events such as those focused on cultural awareness, DEI and critical race theory, community celebrations, and workshops.

Physical Location and Spaces

Eastside and Hilltop respondents expressed similar vision for the physical space of their ideal library. There was overwhelming desire for brick-and-mortar branches, as well as local art that reflects the surrounding community. Communities felt that something too small or temporary, such as pop-ups and mobile services, would not adequately meet their needs. They also noted that expansion of digital services would be less relevant to these communities where devices and broadband are less accessible.

Undergirding the desire for physical space is the vision for the library to be a community gathering place with meeting rooms and social areas. Respondents also envision the ability to participate in hands-on activities including cooking and creating. To be resilient to pandemic conditions and to be utilized year-round, residents envision both indoor and outdoor spaces, describing covered outdoor seating, and roll-up garage doors to integrate the spaces.

I have four young kids ages 10, 9, 7, and 6. Even though there's digital resources...there's something important about going to the place to see and touch the books.

Open House Participant

The two communities similarly prioritized walkability and transit access, and described spaces that are warm and inviting, with comfortable furniture and local art. Spaces would include areas for community gathering and meetings, play spaces, youth spaces, computer labs, and cafés, in addition to collections

and references. There was openness and interest in co-locating with nonprofits and other community services.

Evaluation and Recommendations: *Alternative Service Delivery Models and Co-Location Opportunities*

Alternative Service Delivery Models

Libraries across the county are experimenting with alternative service delivery (ASDM) options that enhance access to library resources and services in a low-capital and low-cost manner. ASDMs considered in this study include:

- **Mobile services.** There is a long tradition of bookmobile service in libraries. Bookmobiles have made it possible for libraries to serve those who are located far from a bricks-and-mortar facility or who have limited transportation options. In addition, some libraries provide on-site services to residents of senior living facilities, ECEAP students, or other vulnerable populations.
- **Kiosks or lockers.** Automated lockers can provide unstaffed holds pickup and convenient book return locations. Holds are usually accessed using a customized security code.
- **Express libraries.** These are small libraries with just enough space for limited rotating collections, holds pickup, and a small number of public access computers. This type of space can be co-located in a shopping mall, a housing development, or a similar facility. These spaces are typically staffed and offer access to system-wide resources. They usually do not offer community meeting space.

Our assessment of these options is summarized in Exhibit 9. While they may be low-cost supplements to traditional library facilities, express libraries, kiosks or lockers, and mobile services do not meet Eastside and Hilltop community desires for permanent library facilities that serve as community gathering places and neighborhood-based spaces for access to library and other services.

Exhibit 9. Assessment of Alternative Service Models

	Community Benefits			Location & Accessibility			Impact on Library System		Financial Feasibility	
	City Values	Community Vision	Community & Economic Benefits	Population Proximity	Accessibility	Property Availability	TPL Strat Plan Alignment	Implications for Main	Capital Cost	Operating Cost
Alternative Service Delivery Models										
Express libraries	●○○○○	●○○○○	●○○○○	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●●	●○○○○	NA	Not evaluated for costs given they fail to meet community Vision.	
Provide access to collections via kiosks or lockers	●○○○○	●○○○○	●○○○○	NA	●●●●●	NA	●○○○○	NA		
Provide access via mobile service delivery	●○○○○	●○○○○	●○○○○	NA	●●●●●	NA	●○○○○	NA		

Source: BERK, 2022.

Co-Location Opportunities

As described on page 9, co-locating libraries with other uses is a common and advantageous practice that can produce multiple benefits, including:

- Shared common spaces such as parking, restrooms, hallways, and meeting space, resulting in lower capital and operating costs.
- Dynamic partnering and service delivery that meets multiple needs in a single place.
- Greater community and economic benefit from increased traffic: place making, safety, and support for local businesses.
- Support for smaller organizations and businesses.

Exhibit 10 summarizes our assessment of desirable and undesirable co-location options.

Exhibit 10. Co-location Options

Desirable Options	Undesirable Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Adjacent to or on school properties▪ With community-based organizations▪ With public, not-for-profit, and for-profit housing▪ With parks and recreation providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Within schools▪ With fire stations

Source: BERK, 2022.

Proximity to schools is highly desirable for libraries and frequently requested by community members and stakeholders. They note that libraries are safe and welcoming places for young people to go after school, whether to do homework or relax and socialize, and that the collections, technology access, and services offered by a library complement a school’s educational mission. Exploratory conversations with Tacoma Public Schools administration reiterated these benefits and noted the potential efficiency of sharing staff or other resources across systems. All parties agree, however, that while proximity is highly desirable, in-building co-location is not, given the differences in populations served: School buildings cannot be freely open to the public and libraries must be inviting to people during all hours of operation. While in-building co-location should not be considered, opportunities for siting libraries close to or even on the same campus as schools, with separate entrances, should be fully explored in collaboration with Tacoma Public Schools.

Tacoma Public Library currently has one library that is co-located with a fire station. While some benefits are generated by this arrangement, the negative impacts on each function outweigh the positives. Routine fire operations, including equipment checks of chainsaws, generators, and water pumps, can be noisy, and some activities require separation to ensure the safety of members of the public. For these and other reasons, we do not recommend future library co-locations with the Fire Department.

Stakeholder Input

Exploratory conversations with potential colocation partners illustrated the following:

- **Members of a network of nonprofit housing developers** actively working on projects in the Hilltop community were enthusiastic about the idea of integrating a library into the redevelopment of the neighborhood. Colocation within some projects might be possible and warrants additional exploration. Key considerations would be whether the Library's space and parking needs could be accommodated, how to structure and manage shared spaces, and how the project could be designed to best honor the community's desires for the neighborhood as collected in public engagement efforts conducted by the developers.¹³ Some projects have already extended offers to businesses or community-based organizations and it would be important to advance conversations quickly if colocation is desired given the speed with which development is occurring.
- Conversations with **Metro Parks Tacoma, Tacoma Public Housing, and Tacoma Public Schools** revealed strong interest in potential colocations as a way to make more efficient use of public resources and to provide convenient, more accessible service points. As one interviewee noted, "There is a strong desire to strategically place public facilities on campuses or hubs with multiple uses, shared spaces, and agencies in proximity." Portland Avenue Park on the Eastside and the People's Community Center in the Hilltop will undergo master planning processes in the near future which create natural opportunities to evaluate co-location with a library.

¹³ Specific examples include Forterra's focus (<https://forterra.org/projects/hilltop-tacoma/>) and #DesignTheHill (https://www.tacomahousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/tha_hilltop_framework_final.pdf), a collaborative effort by Tacoma Housing Authority, Mithun, and Fab-5.

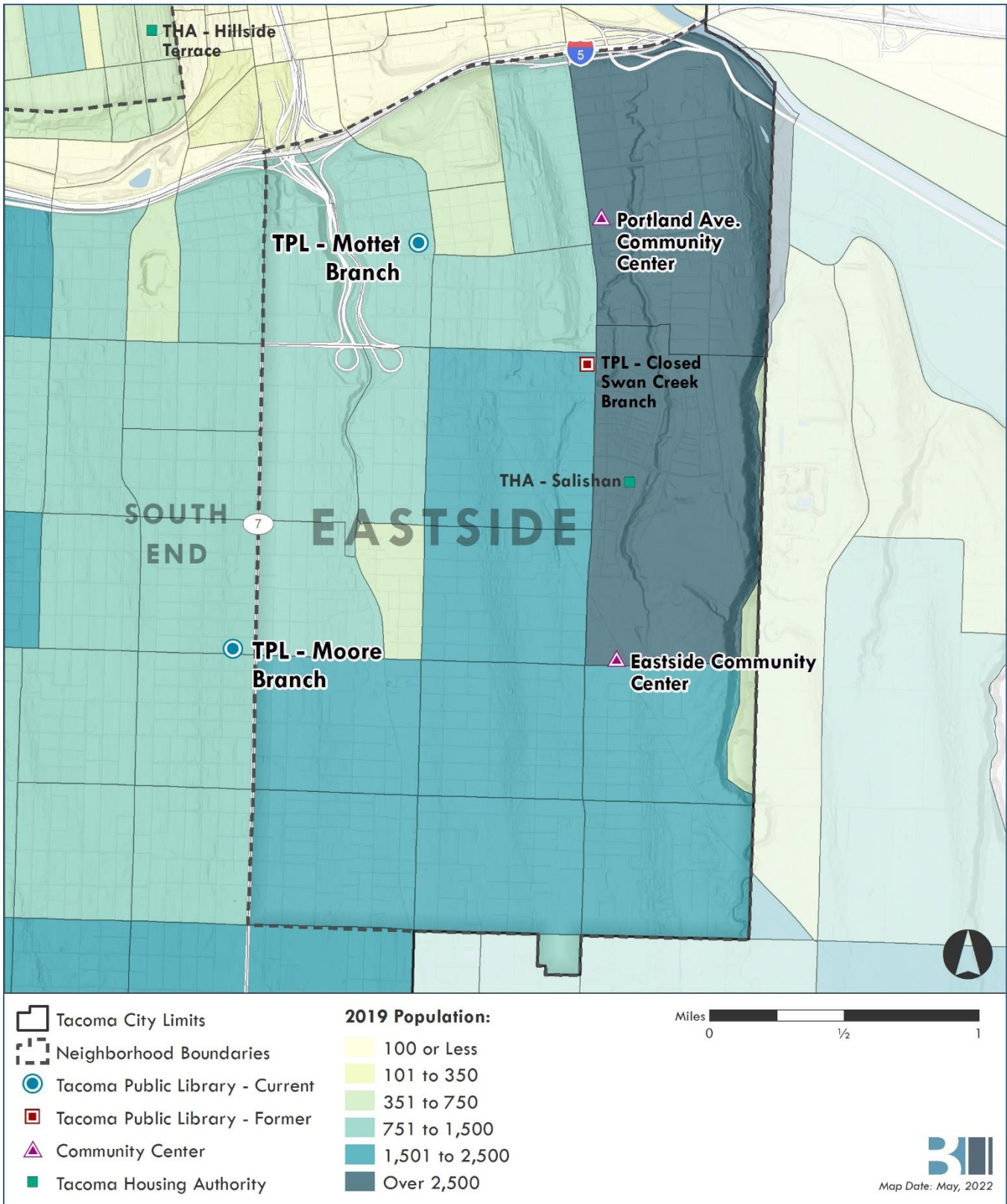
Evaluation and Recommendations: *Eastside*

Context

The following context is excerpted from the **Baseline Situation Assessment Appendix**, which provides an in-depth review of the makeup of the Eastside community, its transportation infrastructure, and existing libraries:

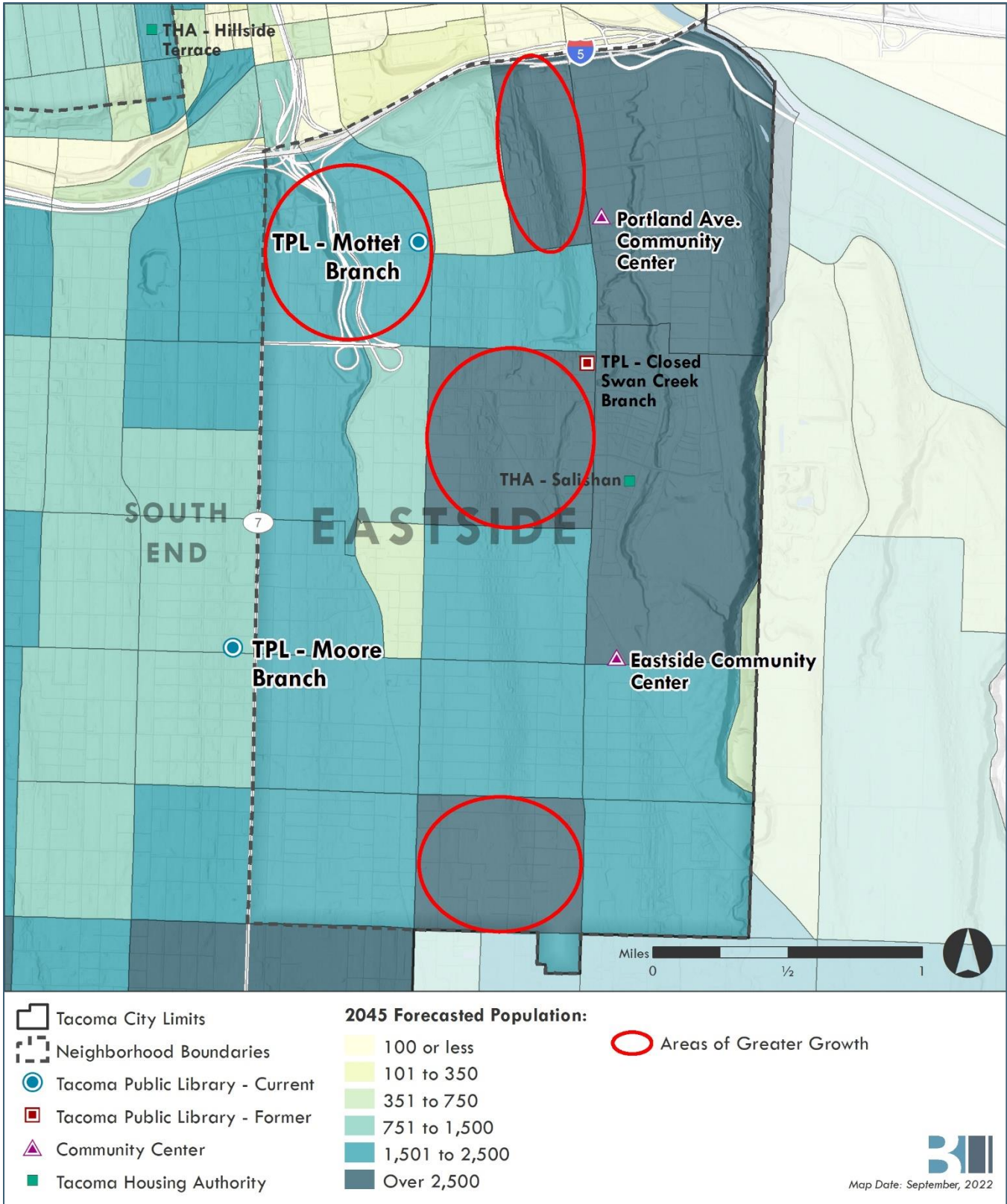
- The Eastside neighborhood is home to over 32,000 people dispersed across a relatively large geography. Exhibit 11 shows current population distribution, and Exhibit 12 illustrates anticipated population distribution in 2045, with greater growth occurring around the Mottet branch, west of the Portland Avenue Community Center, west of Salishan, and between 64th and 72nd Streets.
- About 8% of the population speaks a language other than English and does not speak English proficiently. The average population is younger than the City of Tacoma and Pierce County overall, and slightly younger than the Hilltop.
- While comparatively higher-income than Hilltop, the Eastside community has a significantly lower median household income than Tacoma and Pierce County. Nearly 30% of Eastside households make less than \$35,000 per year and about 19% of households are below the poverty level.
- Eastside residents face significant mobility challenges. The Eastside has limited connectivity and infrastructure, with the subarea divided by railroad tracks and served by limited bicycle and transit infrastructure along major corridors. Additionally, there are significant gaps in the Eastside sidewalk network, making active transportation mobility more limited throughout the subarea.
- The Eastside is currently served by TPL's Mottet and Moore libraries, though Moore sits just outside the neighborhood boundary.
 - At 5,024 sq ft (the second smallest in the TPL system), Mottet holds 4% of system collection and contributes 5% of overall circulation. The building is on a quiet residential street and not directly connected to the McKinley Hill neighborhood business district, which is one block away.
 - Moore is larger, at 15,487 sq ft, and busier, with 13% of system collection and circulation.
 - In our surveys, 28% of Eastside respondents use Mottet frequently and 30% use Moore.

Exhibit 11. Eastside Population, 2019



Source: BERK, 2022 (based on PSRC Land Use Vision).

Exhibit 12. Eastside Population, 2045



Source: BERK, 2022 (based on PSRC Land Use Vision).

Eastside-Specific Vision and Desires

The Community Vision expressed for libraries on the Eastside can be summarized as: *Places to celebrate and convene the assets of the Eastside's diverse communities.*

Just over 30% of Eastside community members feel they do not have access to all the library services they want. Eastside residents currently find that getting to a local library is very challenging, especially for those without access to a vehicle.

Large parts of this neighborhood lack valuable resources such as community centers, places to gather, grocery stores, and other community resources. Some participants seek for TPL to fill this void by offering gathering spaces and spaces where community members can build relationships. Some participants specifically mentioned an interest in partnerships with other nonprofit communities active in the area like the Asia Pacific Cultural Center and Korean Women's Association. They see a library's potential to anchor the residential neighborhoods that make up the greater Eastside.

"[The] physical location is a big deal... [If I had a] library close to my home and I need something, I can always stop by... If you have a library closer to you, I feel like it will make it a more friendly neighborhood."

Open House Participant

A strong theme in the Eastside responses was the diversity of this community and the range of world languages spoken. Some specifically lamented the loss of the Swan Creek branch and the partnership with Tacoma Community House, precisely because of the way it brought so many cultural communities together in a place of learning and exploration. Residents would like to see a place that eliminates barriers between cultures. It was also clear from community input — and backed up by our demographic analysis — that the Eastside is home to larger families and proportionally more families with young children. Services catering to families with children are especially important in this neighborhood.

Eastside Recommendations

Our recommendations for serving the Eastside community are listed below. Exhibit 13 illustrates our scoring of all service options according to the Evaluative Framework established above. We see that the community's preferred option—two new libraries, in addition to retaining Mottet and Moore—is cost-prohibitive. Instead, our recommendation is to invest in existing assets (Mottet and Moore) and add a single new library.

Recommended Option

- **Open a new branch library along Portland Ave.** Create a community-based neighborhood library for children, teens, and adults with flexible spaces to accommodate public gatherings.
- **Implement an interior renovation at Mottet.** Update the building and create space for meetings, readings, and other events.

An Alternative

- **Build a smaller “Phase 1” facility on the Eastside with a focus on meeting space and access to technology and collections.** This initial investment would be designed with the idea that it could be expanded in the future as the neighborhood population grows.

Rejected Options

- **Update and expand Mottet only, OR, Add a new library on Portland Avenue and close Mottet.** Neither option provides sufficient access to libraries for the Eastside community. The difficulty in getting around the Eastside makes it important to have multiple library service points.
- **Close Mottet.** The desire is to augment, not diminish, access to library services. Future population increases around Mottet warrant retaining and investing in this existing asset.
- **Add two libraries.** This option would generate significant capital and operating costs and is out of scale with investments in other neighborhoods.

Exhibit 13. Evaluation of Eastside Options

	Community Benefits			Location & Accessibility			Impact on Library System		Financial Feasibility	
	City Values	Community Vision	Community & Economic Benefits	Population Proximity	Accessibility	Property Availability	TPL Strat Plan Alignment	Implications for Main	Capital Cost	Operating Cost
Eastside										
Recommended Option										
Add new branch along Portland Avenue and renovate interior of Mottet	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●●	NA	\$11.3M	\$973K
Alternative Option										
Add new branch along Portland Ave. (Phase 1) and renovate interior of Mottet	●●●○○	●●○○○	●●○○○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	NA	\$8.6M	\$936K
Rejected Options										
Renovate and expand Mottet (without new Eastside branch)	●○○○○	●○○○○	●●○○○	●○○○○	●○○○○	●●●●●	●●○○○	NA	\$8.0M	\$536K
Add new branch along Portland Ave. and close Mottet	●○○○○	●○○○○	●●○○○	●●○○○	●●○○○	●●●●○	●○○○○	NA	\$7.8M	\$248K
Add two branches to the Eastside	●●●○○	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●●	NA	\$13.3M	\$1.5M

Source: BERK, 2022.

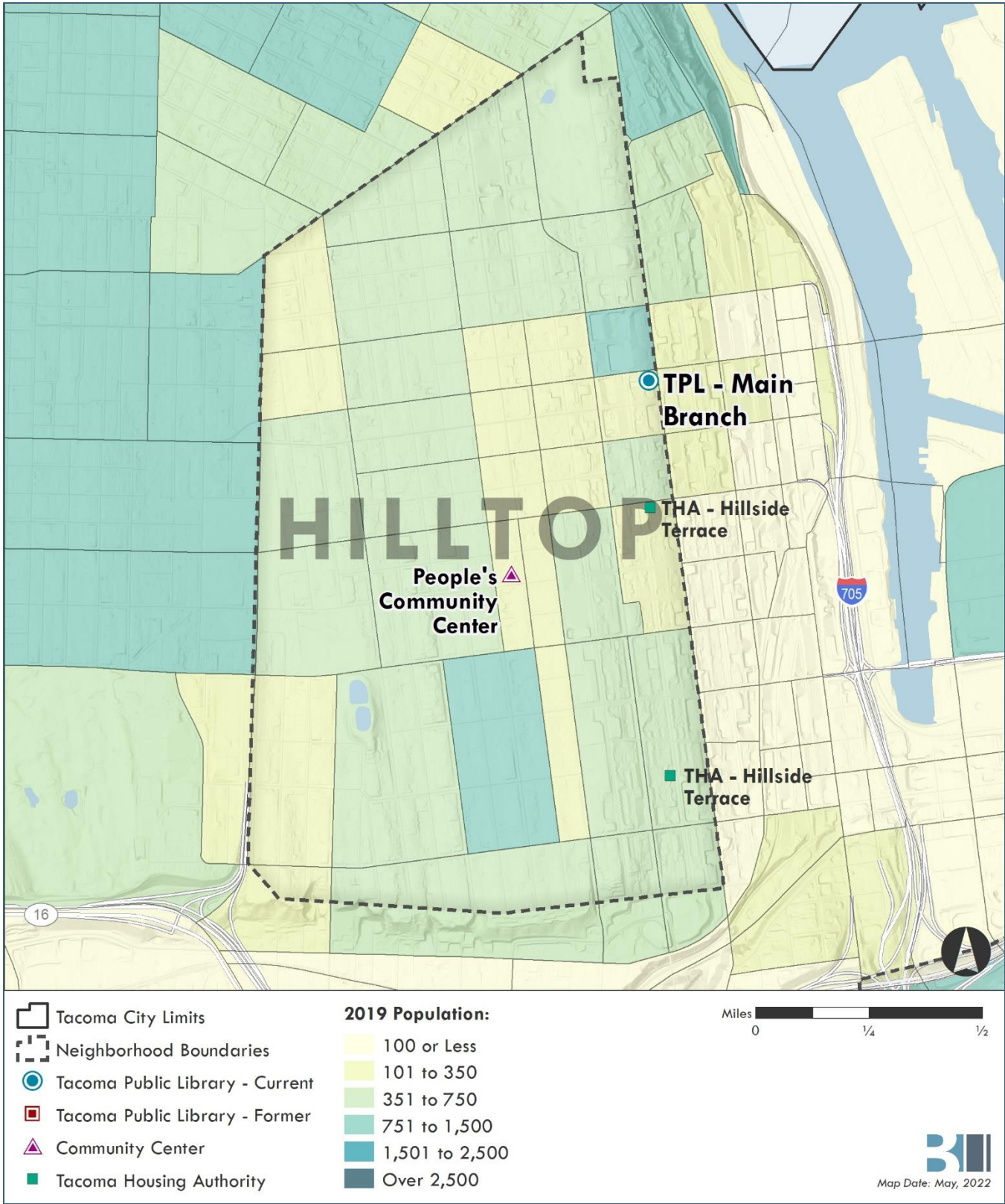
Evaluation and Recommendations: *Hilltop*

Context

The following context is excerpted from the **Baseline Situation Assessment Appendix**, which provides an in-depth review of neighborhood demographics, transportation infrastructure, and existing libraries:

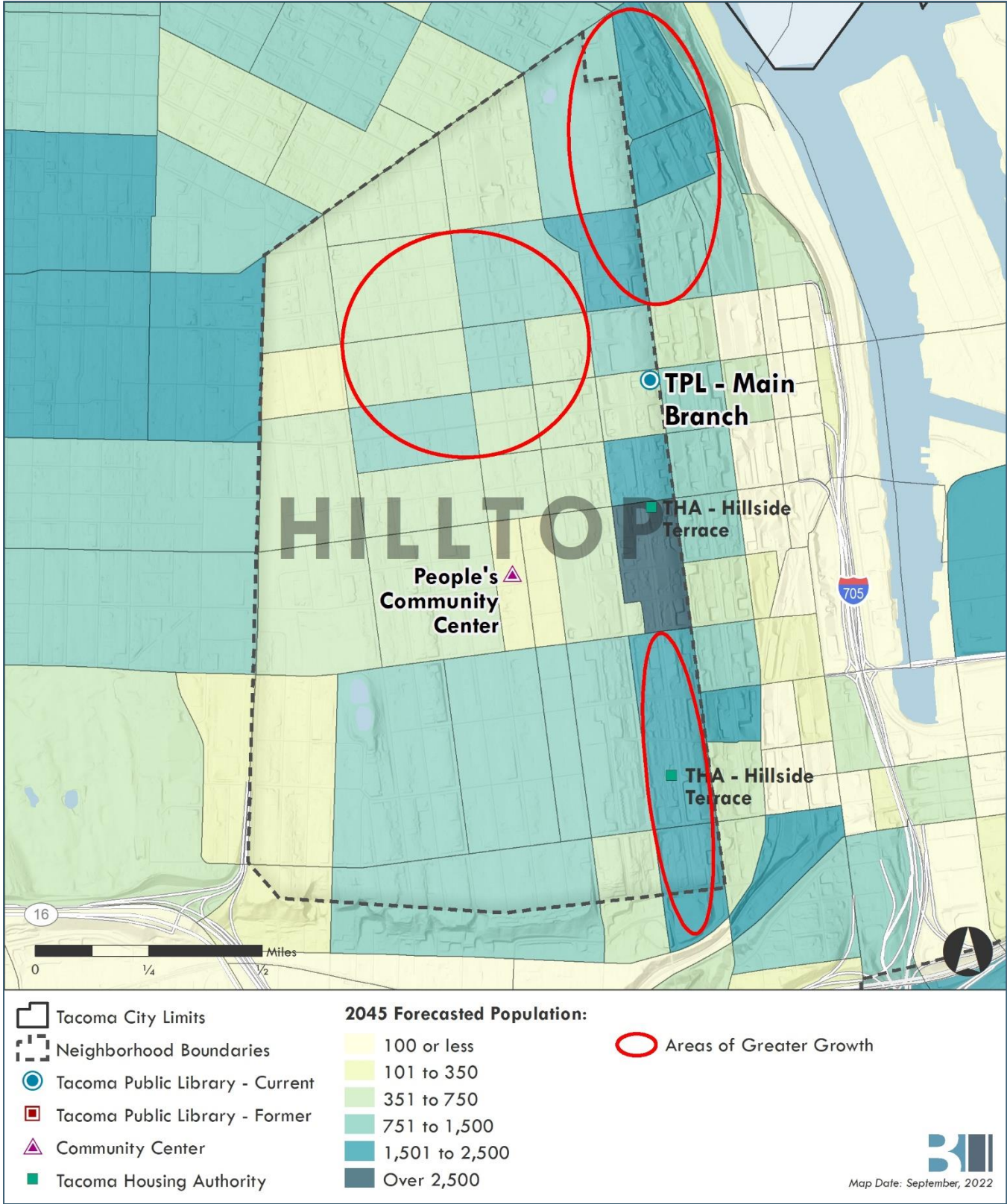
- The Hilltop neighborhood is home to about 15,000 people located in a relatively compact geography. The neighborhood business district serves as the central hub of the neighborhood, housing many businesses and local nonprofits.
- About 27% of the Hilltop population identifies as Black or African American; the neighborhood broadly viewed as a center of Tacoma's Black community.
- As with the Eastside, Hilltop households have incomes that are lower than those in Tacoma and Pierce County as a whole, with more than a third of Hilltop households earning less than \$35,000 per year. The annual household income in Hilltop is nearly \$10,000 less than it is in Eastside. 20% of Hilltop residents live in poverty.
- According to Census data, Hilltop has a significantly higher prevalence of people with disabilities compared to Eastside, Tacoma, and Pierce County overall, at 22% of the population. Approximately 11% of the Hilltop population has a cognitive difficulty and 11% has an ambulatory difficulty.
- The Hilltop subarea has comparatively robust transit and pedestrian infrastructure, as well multiple bicycle connections, particularly on the east side of the subarea near Downtown. Sound Transit is currently extending the Tacoma Link light rail system to the Hilltop subarea from Downtown, with stops along Martin Luther King Way anticipated to open in 2023. This will make access to and from Hilltop much more convenient.
- Exhibit 14 shows current population distribution and Exhibit 15 illustrates the projected distribution of population in 2045. Growth is anticipated around the core business district, as well as in areas straddling the boundary with Downtown to the east. With light rail coming and development occurring along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, the core neighborhood is experiencing significant development pressure, with increasing land prices that may further displace current residents and increase costs for the limited developable land that is suitable for a library.
- With the closure of the MLK Branch, the Hilltop community is most directly served by the Main Library, which is located on the edge of the community, down a steep slope from the neighborhood center. (Our analysis of the Main Library follows, beginning on page 37.)

Exhibit 14. Hilltop Population, 2019



Source: BERK, 2022 (based on PSRC Land Use Vision).

Exhibit 15. Hilltop Population, 2045



Source: BERK, 2022 (based on PSRC Land Use Vision).

TPL'S Main Library

The Main Library is located between Downtown Tacoma and the Hilltop neighborhood. There are challenges with its geographic location as well as with the building itself. The slope from Downtown to Main is quite steep, as is the grade from Main to Hilltop. The building is complex, with a complicated history. The original library (pictured in Exhibit 16) opened in 1903 with funds from a donation by Andrew Carnegie. The historic library was expanded through a large addition in 1952 (see Exhibit 17) and last renovated in 1988. Today, the building is a hybrid comprised of the historic Carnegie building and the 1952 addition. The Carnegie structure is home to the Northwest Room on the second floor, and a large multi-purpose room, the Olympic Room, on the first floor. The 1952 addition houses Main's public service areas and collections, staff offices, storage, and other back-office functions. As noted previously, during the pandemic, public services space on the second floor was converted to house community-based organizations, with the space administered by TPL.

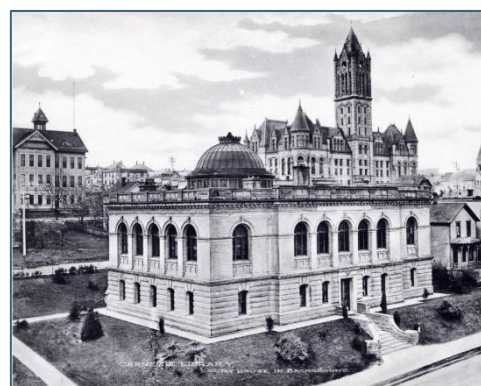
While 54% of Hilltop and 14% of Eastside survey respondents report using Main frequently, the building is generally underutilized relative to the share of TPL resources it holds: at 95,727 square feet, Main has 59% of library system square footage and (at the time of writing) 40% of system's total collections but contributes only 13% of overall circulation.

Low use of the Main Library is attributable to several challenges related to the location and the building itself. The location is relatively inaccessible by transit, bike, or walking, with limited parking (see scoring for Multi-Modal Access beginning on page 42 and in Exhibit 21). Engagement participants noted that the library is down a steep slope from the Hilltop community, which creates access challenges for residents, and that the proximity to the Pierce County Jail and Courthouse creates a perception of unsafe street conditions.

The building is dated and poorly suited to contemporary library services such as community meeting spaces and adaptable room configurations. It is seen by engagement participants as cold, uninviting, and uninspiring. From an operational point of view, it is poorly suited for the back-office functions that occur in the basement, including the unergonomic manual work of material circulation. Staff workspaces are fairly described as dark and dreary.

The building systems are old and inefficient but modernizing them, or separating the two parts of the building, would be difficult and expensive, as the elevator and HVAC systems are located in the 1952 addition, but serve the Carnegie building as well. Moreover, the Northwest Room, which is housed in the Carnegie building, relies on access to historic documents stored in the ideal conditions of the Addition basement.

Exhibit 16. Carnegie Library, ca 1907



Source: Tacoma Public Library, General Photograph Collection CNC-08

Exhibit 17. Carnegie and its Addition, 1952



Source: Tacoma Public Library, Richards Studio D69490-5

While the Main Library comes with many challenges, the building has value on several dimensions and abandoning it is undesirable for a variety of reasons:

- The Carnegie Building is important to the community for its historical value.
- The Northwest Room, which is appropriately housed in a historic building, benefits from proximity to the basement of the 1952 addition, which has conditions well-suited for document storage.
- Population projections show that Downtown population is expected to increase in the coming decades, potentially increasing the need for library services in the vicinity.

Given these factors, it is desirable to invest in and activate Main in the short-term, retaining the option to expand library operations over the long term.

Hilltop-Specific Vision and Desires

The Community Vision expressed for Hilltop libraries can be summarized as: **a place to amplify and connect the Hilltop's unique past, present, and future as a Black neighborhood.**

More than 37% of Hilltop community members feel they do not have access to all the library services they want. Most are hopeful for a full-service library branch on the Hilltop that is at a neighborhood-scale in size. They feel that the Main Library, while proximate, does not truly serve the neighborhood. Hilltop residents expressed their vision in the context of the rapid growth and development of the neighborhood, and concern that the Black heritage of the neighborhood is being lost. A unique part of the expressed vision is how the library can have a role in anchoring the character of the neighborhood with art, cafes, and collections and activities that center Black identity.

"[It should be the] beating heart of the Hilltop. It would be easily accessed by public transportation and have an adequate parking lot. The library should be located in central Hilltop and [be] walkable from homes and businesses."

Open House Participant

Hilltop is also home to several community groups and nonprofits. Community members expressed that there is a general lack of meeting rooms and spaces for the work that these organizations do in the Hilltop. The library can offer services and resources complementary to the work of these organizations and especially impactful for their clients.

Hilltop Recommendations

Our recommendations for serving the Hilltop community are listed below, with scoring for all options shown in Exhibit 18. It is important to note that our recommendation differs from what we heard directly from members of the Hilltop community, who generally expressed an interest in securing a strong library for their neighborhood. Our recommendation is to create a larger facility than what the neighborhood asked for, and that it be designed to reflect and serve that community exceedingly well, as well as provide accessible library resources for the broader Tacoma community, who also deserve an updated central library.

Recommended Option

- **Open a significant flagship library on the Hilltop.** This would serve as the system's new large library, with a proportionally large collections and expert public services. It would be designed to reflect the local community, with dedicated space for an African American collection and would be more accessible than the current Main and an improvement to its dated and dysfunctional physical form . Ideally, it would be located in the core Neighborhood Business District, at 11th Street and MLK Way, and likely co-located with planned development.
- **Renovate the Carnegie Building.** Make this investment to meet storage needs of the Northwest Room collections and modernize public programming options. Retain archival document storage in the Addition's basement.
- **Locate an Express Library on the first floor of the Addition and convert the remaining spaces on floors one and two to a “civic hub” with Library, City, and not-for-profit offices.** Bring the Library's staffing functions up from the basement. Expand public services space if warranted by future population growth.

An Alternative

- If a large new Main library cannot be located on the Hilltop, establish a branch library, likely also co-located with housing or other uses. Renovate Main, retain and consolidate public services to the first floor and convert the second floor to civic offices, including the Library's non-public services functions that would be moved out of the basement. Renovate the Carnegie Building.

Rejected Options

- **Close Main entirely.** The desire is to augment, not diminish, access to library services. Future population increases in the Downtown may warrant expansion of services.
- **Serve Hilltop with an Express Library.** This option does not meet community vision for gathering spaces.
- **Relocate the Northwest Room, and all of Main's public services, to the Hilltop neighborhood.** Space is constrained on the Hilltop and the Library's full departure from the Main Library and Carnegie Building would be undesirable.

“I would be vehemently opposed to an express library on Hilltop. It would be a slap in the face.”

Open House Participant

Exhibit 18. Evaluation of Hilltop Options

	Community Benefits			Location & Accessibility			Impact on Library System		Financial Feasibility	
	City Values	Community Vision	Community & Economic Benefits	Population Proximity	Accessibility	Property Availability	TPL Strat Plan Alignment	Implications for Main	Capital Cost	Operating Cost
Hilltop and Main Recommended Option Open a significant new library on Hilltop; renovate Carnegie; renovate Addition for	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●●	●●●●●	\$51.3M	\$2.3M
Alternative Option Hilltop; renovate Carnegie; renovate Main for 1 floor of public services plus library and	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	\$48.4M	\$1.1M
Rejected Options Add new branch on Hilltop and provide public services on 2 floors	●●●●○	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●●	●○○○○	\$2.8M	\$2.2M

Source: BERK, 2022.

Feasibility of Recommended Options

This section further explores our Recommended Options, taking location, financial feasibility (including anticipated costs and potential revenue options) into consideration.

Location Specifics

Exhibit 19 identifies potential locations for library facilities in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. This initial study did not include any site-specific analysis, and conversations with potential partners were general and exploratory, not detailed or binding in any way. Substantial additional work and conversation will be necessary to narrow in on sites that are both desirable and feasible. This will also involve significant, iterative development of design concepts that meet community visions and work with site-specific parameters.

Eastside Locations

Given current and projected population density (see Exhibit 11 and Exhibit 12) and the location of the Mottet and Moore branches, our recommendation is to locate a new Eastside library along Portland Avenue, near, but not within, the Salishan campus. While there is an otherwise suitable site within the interior of the Salishan property, feedback from participants in Eastside community engagement activities indicates that this is undesirable for non-Salishan residents. Opportunities for new development or redevelopment of an existing building may be found along Portland Avenue. Co-location with Metro Parks Tacoma's (MPT) former community center at Portland Avenue Park should be further explored as that site undergoes a master planning process. Considerations will include the benefits of space and resource sharing with MPT, the synergies associated with co-located services, and community feedback on the accessibility of the site.

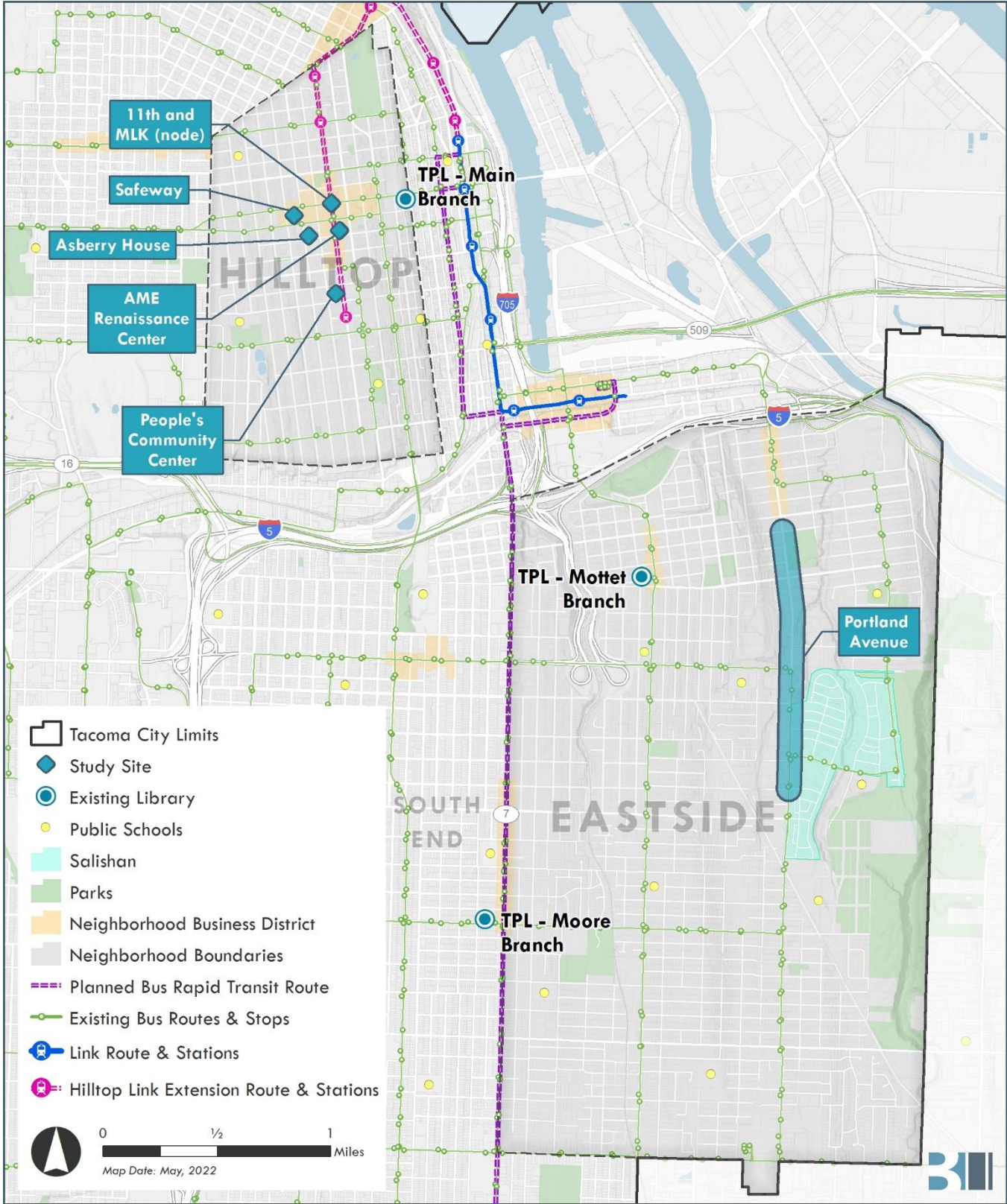
Hilltop Locations

Current population and future population projections in the Hilltop neighborhood are shown in Exhibit 14 and Exhibit 15. As noted in our description of our recommendations, we find it important to both add a service point within or near the Hilltop Neighborhood Business District and to retain library presence at the site of the Main Library. The following additional considerations further describe the locations identified in Exhibit 19 as well as a few additional possibilities. Again, we note that no conversations have been held with current property owners and inclusion of named locations in this list does not presuppose that these sites are feasible locations. Some of these locations have been suggested by community engagement participants or members of the Project Advisory Committee based on their observations of what might be possible or desirable.

- **Co-location with multifamily housing** is seen as highly desirable. A number of projects are underway currently, at varying points of entitlement or development. Exploratory conversations with nonprofit developers identified a strong interest among some for including a library within their projects as the foot traffic and amenities offered by a library are seen as attractive, supporting both community vitality and project feasibility. Considerations for further exploration include design and space, development terms, and timing.

- The **People's Community Center** is owned by the City of Tacoma and operated by Metro Parks Tacoma. There is a desire to rebuild the existing building, which is both dated and cramped. Further consideration of locating the library on the same property or on adjacent parcels, which include residential properties, a church, a Masonic Temple, parking for Saint Joseph's Medical Center, and a Tacoma Police substation, is warranted.
- Co-location with or redevelopment of the **Asberry House, AME Renaissance Center, or Safeway** sites were ideas raised by community stakeholders. As the Safeway is the only grocery store serving the Hilltop neighborhood, co-location would be desirable, with the library sharing a redeveloped site with a more modern grocery store and other smaller retailers or service providers.

Exhibit 19. Potential Eastside and Hilltop Locations as Suggested by Participants



Source: BERK, 2022.

Multimodal Access

Easy multimodal access (by car, transit, and on foot) is essential for library success. Scoring criteria for evaluating access by different transportation modes are presented in Exhibit 20, with scores for specific sites shown in Exhibit 21 and summarized at a neighborhood level just below.

Eastside

The Salishan Area along Portland Avenue from 38th to 48th Streets scored the highest in mobility access for the Eastside neighborhood. The area is very accessible by vehicles due to the proximity to the Portland Avenue and E 38th Street arterials. However, there is no on-street parking and minimal shared off-street parking, and Portland Avenue becomes congested during peak hours. East 48th Street has dedicated bike lanes and connects to the Pipeline Trail, which continues to 40th Street, making potential sites near those streets more accessible for people walking and biking compared to other stretches of Portland Avenue. Portland Avenue also has buffered sidewalks and two bus lines with 30-minute service intervals.

The site of the Mottet Library also scored well, with Portland Avenue Park scoring somewhat lower, particularly for transit access.

Hilltop

Of the potential sites being considered for the Hilltop subarea, two sites ranked highest in terms of accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users:

- **The People's Center** has comfortable and wide pedestrian facilities, adequate on-street parking, and an existing parking lot owned by Metro Parks that would serve the proposed library site. It is also within a block of a Tacoma Link light rail stop that will open in 2023 as part of the Hilltop Link Extension. Multiple bus routes are within a quarter mile. For Hilltop, this site had the fewest safety concerns. This site ranked lower in terms of vehicle accessibility compared to other sites, due mainly to the Hilltop Link extension prioritizing mobility for other modes above vehicles on MLK Jr Way.
- **The southeast corner of South 11th Street and MLK Jr Way** has very similar conditions to the People's Center site, with robust pedestrian facilities and access to transit. Parking conditions score somewhat lower as less on-street parking availability is expected around the proposed site in comparison to the People's Center. There is also existing off-street parking at the People's Center that could serve both the Center and the proposed library.

The site of the Main Library scored relatively low, with poor pedestrian and bike access, poor street safety, and few planned transportation system investments.

Exhibit 20. Access Criteria

Metrics	Low: Score = 1	Medium: Score = 3	High: Score = 5
Vehicle	Poor accessibility. Far away from arterial roads. Poor congestion.	Medium accessibility. Within a few blocks of arterial roads. Average congestion.	High accessibility. Within a block of arterial roads. Lower than average congestion.
Pedestrian / Bicycle	No sidewalks or bike lanes.	6' sidewalks. Trails in the area. Bikeable with some designated bike lanes.	8' + sidewalks or trails adjacent to site. Bike lanes adjacent to site.
Parking	No on-street parking. No adequate off-street parking.	Some restricted and limited on-street and/or off-street parking.	Unrestricted and adequate on-street and/or off-street parking.
Transit	Poor transit access within a few blocks.	Limited bus access.	Light rail/BRT stop within 1/4 mile.
Safety	Uncomfortable for pedestrians. Creates possible traffic safety issues. High presence of risk factors.	Curb separated, smaller sidewalks. Somewhat comfortable for pedestrians. Low presence of risk factors.	Protected sidewalks 8' or wider. No traffic safety concerns. Very comfortable for pedestrians. Low presence of risk factors.
Planned Investments	No upcoming improvements or development.	Transportation improvements planned for the area in the near future. Improvements are generally small.	Transportation improvements currently under construction with more plans in the near future. Improvements are significant for multiple modes.

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2022.

Exhibit 21. Access Evaluation

Subarea	Location	Metrics						Cumulative Score
		Vehicle	Pedestrian / Bicycle	Parking	Transit	Safety	Planned Investments	
Eastside	Existing Mottet Library	3	3	3	3	1	3	16
	Portland Avenue Park	3	2	2	1	3	1	12
	Salishan Area (38 th St to 48 th St)	4	4	1	3	3	2	17
Hilltop	Existing Main Library	4	2	3	3	1	1	14
	11 th St and MLK Jr. Way	3	4	3	5	2	3	20
	1219 S 13 th St	2	3	3	4	2	1	15
	AME Renaissance Center (1321 MLK Jr. Way)	3	3	3	5	1	3	18
	People's Center (1602 MLK Jr. Way)	3	4	4	5	3	3	22
	Safeway (11 th St and Sheridan Rd)	3	3	3	5	1	2	17

Source: Fehr & Peers, 2022.

Financial Feasibility of Recommended Option

Staffing Changes

Exhibit 22 shows facility and staffing changes from the status quo in the Eastside. Exhibit 23 shows the same for the Hilltop, with Exhibit 24 providing additional detail for staffing changes.

In addition to direct staff changes for changes to service points, the Recommended Option and Alternative would require additions to the Library's central management and administrative staff. Despite differences between the Recommended Option and Alternative in terms of total square footage and service point staffing, implications for central staffing are thought to be about the same given the increase in the number of physical service points. Under both scenarios the following additional positions would be required:

- Library Director, Assistant.
- Collection Development Librarian.
- Manager, Automated Services.
- Senior Computer Tech.
- Custodian.
- Maintenance Worker.

Exhibit 22. Eastside Recommended Option: Changes from the Status Quo*

Recommended Option	Facility Changes from Status Quo	Staffing Changes from Status Quo (FTE)
Open a new branch library along Portland Ave.	Construction of 12,000 sq. ft. facility	1 Librarian 2 Library Associates 4.5 Library Assistants
Implement an interior renovation at Mottet	Renovation of 5,025 sq. ft. facility	No change
Alternative		
Open Phase 1 only along Portland Ave	Construction of 8,000 sq. ft. facility	1 Librarian 2 Library Associates 3 Library Assistants
Implement an interior renovation at Mottet	Renovation of 5,025 sq. ft. facility	No change

Note: * Status Quo represents staffing as of 2020-2021, after the system had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: BERK, 2022

Exhibit 23. Hilltop Recommended Option: Changes from the Status Quo*

Recommended Option	Facility Changes from Status Quo	Staffing Changes from Status Quo (FTE)
Open a significant new library on the Hilltop (in leased space).	Tenant improvements on 25,000 sq. ft. facility.	1.5 Librarians 4.0 Library Associates 6.49 Library Assistants = 11.99 FTE**
Renovate the Carnegie Building and expand Northwest Room programming.	Renovation of Carnegie Building (16,000 sq. ft.)	1 Librarian
Locate an Express Library on the first floor of the Addition and convert floors one and two to a “civic hub”	Renovation of Main Addition (76,275 sq. ft.)	1 Librarian 1 Library Associate 1 Library Assistant
Alternative		
Open a new branch library on Hilltop (in leased space).	Tenant improvements on an 8,000 sq. ft. facility	1 Librarian 2 Library Associates 3 Library Assistants
Renovate the Carnegie Building and expand Northwest Room programming.	Renovation of Carnegie Building (16,000 sq. ft.)	1 Librarian
Renovate Addition for 1 floor Main services and library offices	Renovation of Main Addition (76,275 sq. ft.)	No change

Notes: * Status Quo represents staffing as of 2020-2021, after the system had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

** Assumes 13.58 public service FTE from Main will be relocated to the new Hilltop location. Assumes the new Hilltop library will operate with an average 25 FTE.

Source: BERK, 2022

Exhibit 24. Detail for Changes to Hilltop Recommended Option: Staffing FTE

Main Library Status Quo (COVID-era Staffing)	Proposed Staffing for Hilltop New Library	Change from the Status Quo
1 Librarian	3.5 Librarians	1.5 Librarians (assuming Digital Instructor = Librarian)
4 Library Assistants	8 Library Associates	6 Library Associates
2 Library Associates	12.5 Library Assistants	6.5 Library Assistants
4 Library Assistants	1 Librarian II	
6 Pages		
1 Digital Instructor		

Source: BERK, 2022.

Summary of Capital and Operating Costs

Capital and operating cost estimates for the Recommended Option are shown below, with potential revenue sources outlined in the following section.

Capital

Capital costs are one-time costs that include acquisition of property (where applicable), construction and renovation costs, opening day collection materials, and addressing deferred maintenance in the case of existing buildings. The total estimated capital costs for the Recommended Option are **\$62.6 million** as shown in Exhibit 25.

Operating

On-going, annual operating costs include additional building and central staff, maintenance, operations, and (where applicable) lease costs. The estimated annual operating increase in operating costs associated with the Recommended Option is **\$4.0 million** as shown in Exhibit 25.

Exhibit 25. Summary of Estimated Costs for All Options

Costs in Comparison to Status Quo (Rounded to 000s)	Cost Changes									Staffing Changes	
	Capital (One-Time)				Operating (Annual)			Totals		FTE	Count
	Property	Construction	Collection	Deferred Maintenance	Staffing	M&O	Leasing	One-time (Capital)	Annual (Operating)		
Eastside											
Recommended Option											
Add new branch along Portland Avenue (12,000 sq. ft.)	\$704,000	\$7,800,000	\$250,000	\$0	\$685,000	\$288,000	\$0	\$8,754,000	\$973,000	7.5	8
Renovate interior of Mottet	\$0	\$2,512,000	\$100,000	-\$35,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,577,000	\$0	0	0
Eastside Recommended Option Subtotal	\$704,000	\$10,312,000	\$350,000	-\$35,000	\$685,000	\$288,000	\$0	\$11,331,000	\$973,000	7.5	8
Alternative to building a 12,000 sq. ft. branch											
Add new branch along Portland Ave. (Phase 1: 8,000 sq. ft.)	\$704,000	\$5,200,000	\$167,000	\$0	\$559,000	\$205,000	\$0	\$6,071,000	\$764,000	6	6
Renovate interior of Mottet	\$0	\$2,512,000	\$100,000	-\$35,000	\$171,000	\$1,000	\$0	\$2,577,000	\$172,000	1	1
Eastside Alternative Subtotal	\$704,000	\$5,200,000	\$167,000	\$0	\$559,000	\$205,000	\$0	\$8,648,000	\$936,000	6.0	6
Rejected Options											
Renovate and expand Mottet (without new Eastside branch; 12,000 sq. ft. total)	\$0	\$7,800,000	\$200,000	-\$35,000	\$248,000	\$288,000	\$0	\$7,965,000	\$536,000	3.1	3
Add new branch along Portland Ave. and close Mottet (12,000 sq. ft.)	\$0	\$7,800,000	\$0	-\$35,000	\$248,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,765,000	\$248,000	3.1	3
Add two branches to the Eastside (8,000 sq. ft. each)	\$2,545,000	\$10,400,000	\$333,000	\$0	\$1,119,000	\$409,000	\$0	\$13,278,000	\$1,528,000	12	12
Hilltop and Main											
Recommended Option											
Add new flagship library on Hilltop (assume leased, 25,000 sq. ft.)	\$0	\$8,125,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,187,000	\$17,000	\$625,000	\$8,125,000	\$1,829,000	12.0	18
Renovate Carnegie	\$0	\$10,408,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000	\$1,000	\$0	\$10,408,000	\$121,000	1	1
Renovate Addition for Civic Hub and Express Library	\$0	\$34,824,000	\$0	-\$2,079,000	\$298,000	\$68,000	\$0	\$32,745,000	\$366,000	3	3
Hilltop and Main Recommended Option Subtotal	\$0	\$53,357,000	\$0	-\$2,079,000	\$1,605,000	\$86,000	\$625,000	\$51,278,000	\$2,316,000	16.0	22
Alternative to Establishing new Flagship on Hilltop											
Add new branch on Hilltop (assume leased, 8,000 sq. ft.)	\$0	\$2,600,000	\$167,000	\$0	\$559,000	\$205,000	\$200,000	\$2,767,000	\$964,000	6	6
Renovate Carnegie	\$0	\$10,408,000	\$0	\$0	\$120,000	\$1,000	\$0	\$10,408,000	\$121,000	1	1
Renovate Addition: Main services on 1 floor and library offices on other floors	\$0	\$37,320,000	\$0	-\$2,079,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$35,241,000	\$0	0	0
Hilltop and Main Alternative Subtotal	\$0	\$50,328,000	\$167,000	-\$2,079,000	\$679,000	\$206,000	\$200,000	\$48,416,000	\$1,085,000	7.0	7
Rejected Options											
Add new branch on Hilltop	\$0	\$2,600,000	\$167,000	\$0	\$1,666,546	\$206,000	\$200,000	\$2,767,000	\$2,193,546	18.31	~25
Renovate Carnegie	\$0	\$10,408,000	\$0					\$10,408,000			
Retain 2 floors of Main public services	\$0	\$40,369,000	\$0	-\$2,079,000				\$38,290,000			
Systemwide Changes											
Recommended Option											
Additional Central Staff needed for changes to system	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$732,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$742,000	7.0	7
Recommended Option Total	\$704,000	\$63,669,000	\$350,000	-\$2,114,000	\$3,022,000	\$384,000	\$625,000	\$62,609,000	\$4,031,000	30.5	37
If both Alternatives are chosen											
Additional Central Staff needed for changes to system	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$732,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$742,000	7.0	7
Alternatives Total (Assuming Alternatives on Eastside & Hilltop)	\$704,000	\$55,528,000	\$334,000	-\$2,079,000	\$1,970,000	\$421,000	\$200,000	\$57,064,000	\$2,763,000	20.0	20
Rejected Options											
Additional Central Staff needed for changes to system	0	0	0	0	\$732,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	7.0	7

Source: BERK, 2022.

Revenue Options

As noted in the **Baseline Situation Assessment Appendix**, TPL receives nearly all of its operating funds via the City of Tacoma's General Fund. In the 2021-2022 biennium, 95.3% of operating funds came from this source. On average from 2010 to 2020, Library funding represented 4.7% of General Fund expenditures. The Library competes with other City services for funding from this source as citywide revenues fail to keep up with the rising cost of providing services. The Library's capital needs, as well as those of other City departments, are similarly funded through the City's Capital Facilities Program.

The City of Tacoma, like many Washington cities, is financially constrained by the effect of several tax-limiting measures and faces operating costs that exceed allowable revenue growth. The City's projected general fund shortfall for the 2021-2022 biennium was \$40 million, based on a continuation of current levels of service during a time of pandemic-related fiscal challenges. This gap is anticipated to continue in future years. For the 2021-2022 biennium, the City entered a decision-making process to close the gap in a sustainable manner and balance the budget. Over the decades, TPL has borne the impact of some of these financial challenges through staff and service level reductions.

While we anticipate that some portion of the expanded operations and capital investments envisioned in this study will be covered by City general fund and capital program resources, we foresee the likely need to identify additional revenue sources given the fiscal constraints facing the City.

Tax Revenues

Several options exist that, at their core, would use local taxes to fund capital investments and ongoing operations:

- **Capital bonds.** The City of Tacoma has capacity available to issue both voted and non-voted bond measures and is currently evaluating citywide capital funding needs and potential voter support for the issuance of bonds. The City has multiple options for bonding against future revenues, but for investments in library capital, the City would likely finance using general purpose property taxes. There are legal limits for both voted and non-voted bonds: the City can legally incur debt up to 1.5% of the total taxable property value in non-voted debt and an additional 1% of the total assessed value in voted debt. According to the 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report¹⁴, the total non-voted capacity is \$486 million, of which the City is using \$240 million. After accounting for the City's finance policy to reserve 10% of non-voted debt capacity, **the City has a remaining \$197 million in non-voted property tax bonding capacity.** Voted debt has voter turnout requirements and a 60% passage threshold. After accounting for current voted general obligation bonds, **the City has an additional voted debt capacity of \$369 million.**

Using the non-voted debt capacity requires City Council action, but the capital investment for the Recommended Option of \$62.6 million is well within the non-voted debt limit. Pursuing grant and individual giving to offset some of this amount could make this option more attractive to decision-makers.

- **Operating Levy.** As noted above, new libraries come with a need for increased operating support to cover staffing, collections and other materials, and building operations and maintenance. An

¹⁴ https://cms.cityoftacoma.org/Finance/Financial_Reports/CAFR/2020/2020-complete-acfr.pdf

operating levy, either in the form of an increase in City property tax to bolster the overall general fund, or a library-specific measure, could be used to raise revenues to cover these costs.

State, Federal, and Philanthropic Sources

TPL can look to grants and philanthropy to augment revenues from the local tax base. Appeals to all of the funding sources listed here will be bolstered by the new libraries' focus on providing equitable access to library services to underserved communities.

- **State Capital Grants.** The Washington State Department of Commerce funds a Library Capital Improvement Program (LCIP) to assist libraries operated by governmental units to “acquire, construct, or rehabilitate their facilities”¹⁵. The 2021-2023 legislative session awarded \$10 million to the program and 21 projects across Washington were selected to receive grant funding. Libraries may request a maximum of \$2,000,000 per project and may apply for more than one project as long as it is for separate facilities. Applications require a 50% match of the total cost of the project, and priority is given to facilities registered as historic places and those in distressed or rural areas.
- **Capital Appropriations.** Tacoma may appeal to its state and federal legislative representatives for line item appropriations to support investment in new facilities.
- **Fundraising.** The Tacoma Public Library Foundation has been reestablished and may be a source of both capital and operating funds. Exhibit 26 summarizes recent capital fundraising successes for Tacoma-based organizations, each of which generated more than \$10 million. Looking to comparable library systems such as King County, Pierce County, and Timberland, the non-profit foundation arms of these systems raised on average \$0.75 per capita (based on their service area populations) in 2020. This suggests that a TPL foundation might raise \$100,000-\$200,000 annually to provide supplementary operating funds. Note that foundation operating costs, including campaign expenditures, must be considered when estimating the net contributions of fundraising efforts. Capital campaigns typically require a paid consultant and several paid staff. Currently, the TPL Foundation is entirely volunteer-run and does not have the capacity to run a capital campaign of this size.

¹⁵ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/library-capital-improvement-program/>

Exhibit 26. Capital Fundraising Examples for Tacoma-Based Organizations

Example	Amount Raised	Notes
Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma Eastside Community Center	\$10.2 million	Fundraising target was \$3 million for capital, \$1.5 million for expenses, and \$7 million for endowment
Tacoma Art Museum	\$15.5 million	Fundraising campaign included State, private organization, and private citizen contributions
Tacoma Community House	\$13.3 million	Capital campaign from 2014-2018
YWCA Tacoma	\$12.2 million	Home at Last housing project funded by a National Development Council (NDC) equity investment

Source: BERK, 2022.

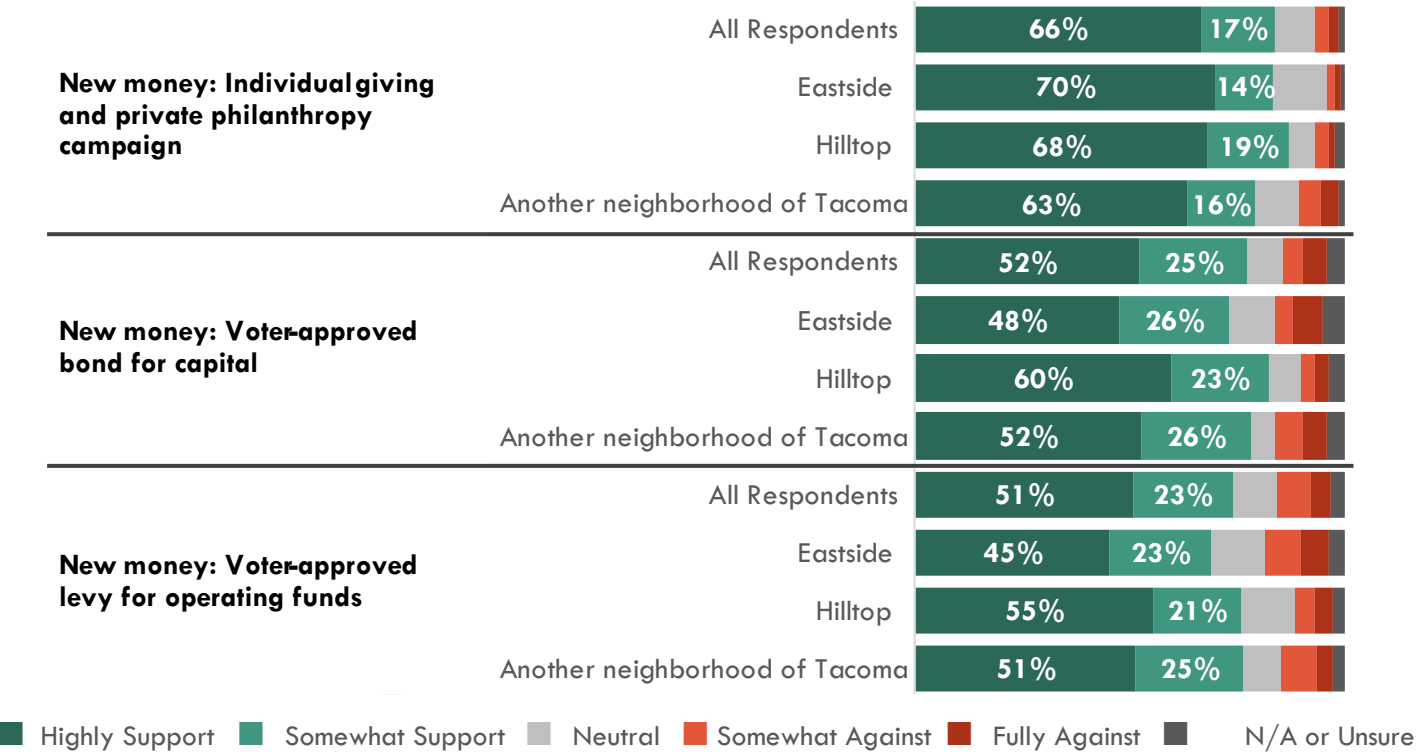
Survey Respondent Input on Funding Options

Survey respondent input on potential funding choices is shown in Exhibit 27, with the following key takeaways:

- Respondents are not interested in closing existing libraries to fund new facilities.
 - 50% of respondents (51% of Hilltop residents) opposed reducing Main to the Northwest Room and an Express Library.
 - 74% of respondents (75% of Hilltop residents) opposed closing Main.
 - 78% of respondents (87% of Eastside residents) opposed closing Mottet to fund additional library access.
- 83% of respondents support leveraging individual giving and philanthropy.
- 77% support issuing voter-approved capital bonds, and 74% support a voter-approved operating levy.

While survey respondents do not necessarily reflect the opinion of all neighborhood residents, all Tacoma residents, or future voters, the high support expressed for voter-approved capital bonds and operating levy indicate a willingness among library supporters to help fund investments in community libraries.

Exhibit 27. Community Input on Revenue Options



Source: BERK, 2022.

Stakeholder Input

BERK held exploratory conversations with several stakeholders from Tacoma’s philanthropic community that generated the following takeaways:

- The philanthropic community in Tacoma is relatively small and interconnected, comprised of a handful of funders and foundations interested in specific causes and in making investments to strengthen the Tacoma community in general.
- The individuals we spoke with were excited at the prospect of partnering for investment in 21st Century libraries in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods with physical space for co-location and activations with community-based partners. They thought the idea would resonate with others as well, and encouraged building a robust partnership or “collective impact” approach, rather than thinking of the Library as “core” and philanthropy and community-based partners as “supplementary.” By rallying around a shared vision, a more comprehensive and impactful solution would be possible. This form of partnership also requires substantial up-front time and energy to develop, the sharing of power and decision making, and ongoing maintenance.
- It would be important to encourage ambitious thinking about the potential for 21st Century libraries, updating how members of the philanthropic community, and community members at large, think about libraries.

- There are several reasons why community-focused libraries designed, funded, and operated in collaboration with community-based organizations would be compelling to local philanthropists:
 - The idea resonates as restorative justice by investing directly in neighborhoods that have been disinvested in and underserved. It also represents an opportunity to protect against gentrification by investing in equity and access.
 - The importance of “social infrastructure” (as defined on page 13). Physical spaces are needed in both neighborhoods to support community interaction and access to services and resources. While no one used the term “social infrastructure” as defined on, the concept is the same.
 - Libraries were describes as “pillars” or “centers” of the community and would be natural platforms for library- and partner-driven services related to education, the arts, and other topics of interest.
 - Philanthropy has supported many Tacoma-based organizations for years but has few opportunities to provide access to affordable office and programming space, which is a critical need for nonprofits and a structural benefit when it can be secured. Given the cost of new construction, subsidies may be required to ensure that co-location opportunities truly are affordable.

Conclusions and Recommended Next Steps

Tacoma's Eastside and Hilltop communities strongly desire the restoration of library services in the form of neighborhood-based facilities designed for the 21st Century. The importance of this investment is about more than access to library services: it is also about the equitable investment in municipal services by the City of Tacoma and it is about providing equitable access to information and social infrastructure for two of Tacoma's historically under-resourced neighborhoods.

In addition to these considerations specific to the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods, Tacoma residents citywide deserve investment in the system's largest library. The current Main Library is poorly located and ill-suited to provide contemporary library services.

As this Feasibility Study concludes, community interest is high, and it will be important to move quickly to secure the capital and operating funding needed to meet the visions established through this process. Development in the Hilltop Neighborhood Business District is progressing rapidly, with projects active in different phases of planning, tenanting, and construction. We recommend that TPL and the City of Tacoma move quickly to assess specific options to locate a library in the Hilltop neighborhood and secure space. This will likely need to happen more rapidly than the process required to secure capital funding for the full Recommended Option as identified in this report. We recommend that the City find other funding to secure space while this longer process unfolds.

Additional next steps include:

- Securing full capital and operating funding.
- Further exploring co-location opportunities with public and not-for-profit partners.
- Engaging the local philanthropic community, as well as individual donors, in establishing a shared vision of the role libraries can play to support and elevate the Tacoma community.

Appendices

The following Appendices are contained under a separate cover.

- Baseline Situation Assessment.
- Community Engagement Summary.