

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Update from King County Library System

Katie Kuciemba Halse, Assistant Director of Intergovernmental Relations, 452-2860
City Manager's Office

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

King County Library System (KCLS) Executive Director Heidi Daniel and Regional Manager David Frappier will provide an update. This briefing is an opportunity for Council to learn more about the KCLS, including recent initiatives and programs. No formal Council action is required.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The King County Library System (KCLS) is one of the largest library systems in the country and serves nearly 1.6 million residents in rural, suburban and urban King County, and small areas of Pierce and Snohomish counties.

KCLS was founded in 1942 as an independent taxing district and operates under the governance of a seven-member Board of Trustees (RCW 27.12.192). Trustees are appointed by the King County Executive and confirmed by the King County Council. The Board is responsible for hiring the Executive Director, approving the Library District's annual operating budget, setting the property tax levy and overseeing the long-range strategic plan.

The Executive Director oversees the annual operating budget and keeps the KCLS Board of Trustees apprised of the Library District's financial and operational status. The Executive Director ensures that KCLS operates within its approved budget while providing relevant programs, services and materials that meet the needs of the diverse communities the Library System serves.

KCLS operates 50 libraries, serving 5.4 million library visitors annually. Cardholders at the four Bellevue branches of KCLS checked out or renewed 2.8 million items in 2024. The four branches in Bellevue are Lake Hills, Newport Way, Library Connection @ Crossroads, and Bellevue Library (in Downtown).

On December 10, 2024, Bellevue City Council approved an ordinance sunsetting the Bellevue Library Advisory Board. KCLS staff will now take on the role of providing periodic reports to the Council and City Manager about library services. This outreach includes an annual report—usually in the first half of the year—with Bellevue-specific data on library usage, activities, and key issues.

Strategic Framework

The KCLS' Strategic Framework reflects its commitment to public service that enhances lives, forges connections and strengthens communities. For 2025, KCLS is focused on the four priority areas below:

- Elevate customer experiences for the KCLS service area communities, centering those most

negatively impacted by inequity to amplify the value of the Library.

- Reimagine physical and virtual library spaces with an emphasis on accessibility and empowering multi-lingual communities.
- Enhance staff experience and engagement at KCLS, fostering communities of belonging and well-being by expanding our trauma-informed approach.
- Unify internal processes for managing change, data, internal communication and policies, using an Equity Impact Tool to inform decision making.

KCLS Funding

In 2025, total General Fund expenditures are budgeted at \$164.6M, reflecting a 7.8 percent increase over the previous year. KCLS' annual budget is 96 percent funded through property tax revenues, and the revenue is distributed among all 50 libraries to ensure equitable service for the urban, suburban, and rural communities served. KCLS uses both levies and capital bonds to operate and expand the system. Levies provide funding for the operating budget, which is for the operation and maintenance of the library system and its facilities. Capital bonds can only be used for construction to expand and build new facilities and infrastructure.

The 2025 KCLS regular property tax rate is \$0.24520 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This raises approximately \$140.9 million in property tax annually dedicated for KCLS, with Bellevue contributing \$22.6 million. The 2025 median assessed value for a home in Bellevue is \$1,524,000, resulting in \$374 for library collections, programs, and services. The operating levy is capped at \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The last capital bond was approved by voters in 2004 for \$172 million and was paid off in 2024. Those capital bond funds were used to construct 16 new libraries, renovate 14 libraries, expand 11 libraries and two parking lots. All projects included in the 2004 capital levy are completed. Specific projects in Bellevue include:

- Lake Hills Library renovation was completed in September 2010. The \$2.8 million library is located in the redeveloped Lake Hills Shopping Center.
- Newport Way Library expansion and renovation was completed in April 2011. The \$3.4 million project added more space to the meeting room and reading area, increasing the size of the library by 600 square feet.
- Bellevue Library Parking Garage was completed in June 2013. The \$11.1 million project added 163 parking spaces, for a total of 362 spaces.
- Library Connection @ Crossroads underwent interior improvements that were completed in January 2014. Enhancements included new carpet, furniture, computers, the installation of new systems for improved access to library materials and expanded public seating.

Historically, KCLS' operational expenditures have significantly outpaced revenues. Rising costs from inflation—such as salaries, healthcare, fuel, digital materials, and maintenance—have put pressure on the budget. According to the [KCLS 2025 Budget](#), leadership is considering asking voters to approve a levy lid lift in the future. This would increase revenue and help KCLS maintain services as costs continue to rise faster than the current 1 percent revenue growth limit.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

There is no policy impact associated with this update.

Fiscal Impact

There is no additional fiscal impact other than the current amount included in property taxes at this time. The 2025 KCLS regular property tax rate is \$0.24520 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The 2025 median assessed value for a home in Bellevue is \$1,524,000, resulting in \$374 for library collections, programs, and services.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A