



# The Seattle Public Library

## Memorandum

Date: April 15, 2025

To: Mayor Bruce Harrell  
Councilmember Maritza Rivera, Chair, Seattle City Council Libraries, Education  
and Neighborhoods Committee

From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian  
Jan Oscherwitz, Library Levy Administrator

Subject: **2024 Library Levy Report Submittal**

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By April 15 of each year, The Seattle Public Library is required by ordinance to submit an annual levy report to the Mayor and the City Council. This report details the Library's progress in using levy proceeds to restore, maintain, and improve core Library services during the prior year. The Library Board of Trustees approved the 2024 Library Levy Report at its March 28, 2025 meeting. The [report](#) is available to the public on the Library's website.

In its 2019 proposal to voters, the Library laid out a clear framework for how levy proceeds would be used to maintain and enhance Library services in the areas of Hours and Access, Collections, Technology and Online Services, Children's Programming, and Maintenance. Since we began implementing the levy in January 2020, we have made progress on some key levy priorities but had to defer others. In 2024, the Library experienced challenges including budget-related staffing shortages and a ransomware attack that disrupted the Library's technology services and systems for several months. Despite setbacks, we made progress on levy promises, including completing a strategic plan, completing the seismic retrofit and renovation of the Green Lake Branch, stabilizing open hours, and investing in collections. In 2024, the Library spent \$31.7 million of 2019 Levy funds and \$130,000 of 2012 Levy funds in key levy investment areas.

### **Hours and Access: \$13.9M (2019 Levy)**

The levy paid for 25% of all staffing at the Library. In the first quarter, we were able to significantly increase scheduled Library open hours. But a hiring freeze that we implemented in tandem with the city to address upcoming budget shortfalls led to staffing shortages that reduced hours temporarily. The Library was able to stabilize operations during the second and

third quarter, and in late September, we partially restored open hours. When the remodeled Green Lake Branch reopened in late October, the Library was operating at 99% of our 2019 baseline and planning for an increase in hours in late January 2025 that would bring the Library above 2019 levels and closer to our levy promises for expanded hours.

Our Social Services team, created in 2022 and funded in part by the 2019 levy, piloted new programs in 2024 to help our most vulnerable patrons meet basic needs and find community and connection. The team held three Resource Fairs and 35 Coffee and Conversations events, and helped community members over 1,100 times, including referrals to lifeline services. The team also provided training and support for staff around the system.

Our security team, which includes eight levy-funded security positions, conducted nearly 5,000 branch patrols in 2024, including both overnight and early morning patrols at high-incident branches to ensure our buildings were safe before opening.

**Collections: \$6.2M (2019 Levy)**

The levy paid for 47% of the Library's spending on books and materials. We continued to make significant investments in both digital and physical materials while responding to increased demand for digital books, as costs for these materials continued to sharply rise. We added over 45,000 titles and nearly 100,000 copies to our e-book and e-audiobook collections and made changes in borrowing and purchasing practices that helped us manage high costs for e-books. We also added over 168,000 items to our physical collection, including 19,000 copies of Peak Picks, the no-holds, no-wait collection that is 100% levy funded. Since that collection's launch in 2017, Peak Picks titles have been checked out over one million times.

**Technology and Access: Operations \$3M (2019 Levy), \$0.1M (2012 Levy), Capital \$0.7M (2019 Levy)**

The Levy paid for 40% of the Library's non-labor technology spending in 2024. In late May, we fell victim to a ransomware attack, which significantly disrupted Library systems and services. The incident forced us to take most technology-based services offline. The Library restored services throughout the summer and, by Labor Day, most systems and services were restored. In response to the cyberattack, the Library accelerated security improvements, including moving systems to the cloud, implementing multi-factor identification for staff, and hiring a cybersecurity analyst. The levy also provided funds to support our hot spot lending program, which continues to provide internet access through our general collection and through targeted outreach with key community organizations. Nearly 5,700 loans of hot spots were made in 2024.

**Children’s Programming: \$0.4M (2019 Levy)**

The Levy supports expanded children’s programming and pays for the Kaleidoscope Play & Learn program. In 2024, we offered over 290 in-person weekly Play and Learn programs at seven different branches. Sessions were conducted in Amharic, Chinese, English, Somali, and Spanish.

We also offered over 1,000 story times at 23 branches, the Central Library, and in the community. Programs included world language story times in Spanish and Arabic and a perennial patron favorite, Firefighter Story Time. The Levy pays for 35% of the Library’s children and teen service librarians (spending is reflected in the Hours and Access levy category)

**Maintenance: Routine Maintenance \$1.7M (2019 Levy), Major Maintenance \$5.3M (2019 Levy)**

After a lengthy closure for a seismic retrofit and other renovations, the Library’s historically landmarked Green Lake Branch reopened on Oct. 28, with the levy funding 65% of the project. The renovation preserved historic features of the Carnegie-era branch, while updating it with seismic reinforcement, an electricity-powered HVAC system, and accessibility upgrades. Thanks to the 2019 levy, city appropriated dollars, and other funding sources, the Northeast and Southwest branches, which recently received electric HVAC upgrades, were able to provide air conditioning during summer months in 2024.

Despite operating with reduced staffing for most of the year, our facilities and janitorial/custodial teams completed nearly 6,000 work orders in 2024, including 1,750 in Q4 alone.

**Administration: \$0.5M (2019 Levy)**

In addition to providing funds to administer the levy, the 2019 Levy included funds to support planning for the “Library of the Future.” In November 2024, the Library Board adopted a 10-year strategic plan, informed by a levy-funded, multi-year process that engaged dozens of community organizations, hundreds of Library patrons, Library staff, and other invested parties. The plan seeks to help the Library build the community’s sense of belonging and the organization’s resiliency. It identifies steps the Library will take to address current and future challenges and improve community outcomes. The Library began implementation of Stage 1 of the strategic plan in January 2025. This plan will help guide the Library through the final years of the 2019 levy and help lay a framework for potential future levy renewals.

We are proud of what we accomplished with levy funding in 2024, providing the Seattle community with access to library facilities, materials, and services despite unprecedented challenges. We look forward to sharing details about our Library levy accomplishments and welcome any questions about our progress.

Transmittal Memo – 2024 Library Levy Report to Council

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council  
Ben Noble, Central Staff Director  
Eric McConaghy, Central Staff Analyst  
Paddy Wigren, Central Staff Executive Assistant  
Greg Wong, Deputy Mayor  
Patty Camacho, Mayor's Office External Affairs Operations Manager  
Dan Nolte, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor  
Dan Eder, City Budget Office Interim Director  
Jeanette Blankenship, City Budget Office Deputy Director  
Lisa Gaccione, City Budget Office Fiscal & Policy Manager  
Adam Schaefer, City Budget Office Council Relations & Policy Lead  
Alan Lee, City Budget Office Fiscal & Policy Analyst

2024 Annual  
The Seattle Public Library  
**LEVY REPORT**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A year of new challenges and renewed resilience

### Levy background

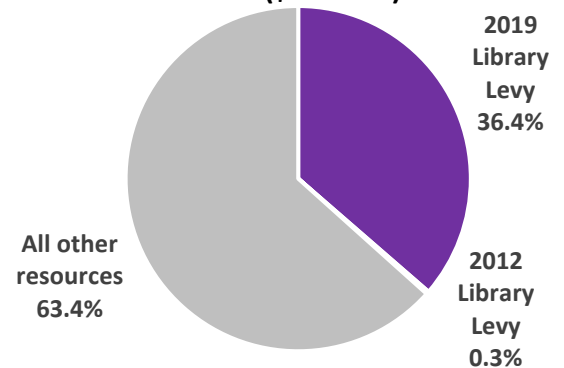
In August 2019, Seattle voters overwhelmingly approved (76%) a seven-year, \$219.1 million property tax levy to maintain and enhance Library services from 2020 through 2026, renewing a seven-year, \$122.6 million levy that expired at the end of 2019.

In 2024, the 2019 Levy accounted for \$50.3 million (36.4%) of the Library's total revised budget of \$138.4 million. The 2012 Levy provided \$0.4 million (<0.3%). Other sources of funding include the City's general fund, state and federal grants, private funds, and Library fund balance. The Library spent \$109.1 million (79% of its revised budget) in 2024, including \$31.7 million of 2019 Levy funds and \$130,000 of 2012 Levy funds. Most of the levy budget underspend was related to multiyear projects in the Library's Capital Improvement Program. Those funds carry over to 2025.

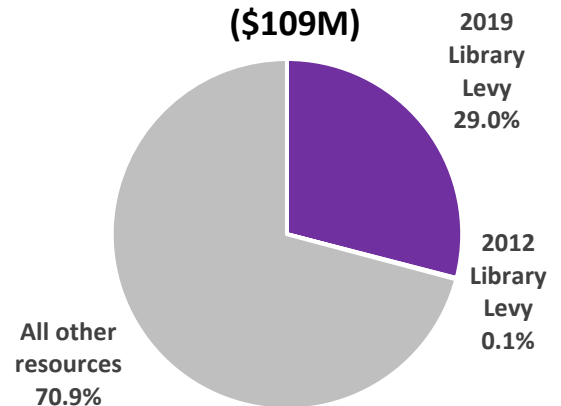
As part of its 2019 proposal to voters, the Library laid out a clear framework for how Levy proceeds would be used to maintain services that had been funded by the 2012 Levy and to provide additional services and programs over the seven-year levy period. This report, which covers levy activities and spending for 2024, with an emphasis on Q4, continues the series of [quarterly levy updates](#) the Library has provided for the Board of Trustees and the public since 2013.

Beyond renewing 2012 Levy commitments, the 2019 Levy provides support for additional Library hours; elimination of overdue fines; improved collections and technology; safe, clean, and well-maintained buildings; specialized programming and services for children; and development of a plan for the future of Library service. Levy funding supports a quarter of all positions at the Library, including 35% of children and teen service librarian positions.

**2024 Library Revised Budget (\$138.4M)**



**2024 Library Spending (\$109M)**



## 2024 highlights

In 2024, the Library fulfilled many levy promises while responding to unanticipated challenges in keeping our facilities and online services safe and open. Most notably, in late May, we fell victim to a ransomware attack, which significantly disrupted Library systems and services. The incident forced us to take most technology-based services offline. The Library restored services throughout the summer and, by Labor Day, most systems and services were restored. Here are other highlights of 2024, which you will find detailed in this report.

**Stabilizing open hours:** In Q1 2024, the Library increased hours and service levels. In Q2, however, a hiring freeze created staffing shortages and temporarily reduced hours. From April through September, the Library was able to stabilize staffing and operations. In late September, we increased open hours once again. When the remodeled Green Lake Branch reopened in late October, the Library was operating at 99% of our 2019 baseline. The Library also began planning for an increase in hours for late January 2025 that would bring the Library above 2019 levels and closer to our 2019 levy promises.

**Renovation of the Green Lake Branch and HVAC upgrades:**

After a lengthy closure for a seismic retrofit and other renovations, the Library's historically landmarked [Green Lake Branch](#) reopened on Oct. 28, with the levy funding 65% of the project. The renovation preserved historic features of the Carnegie-era branch, while updating it with seismic reinforcement, an electricity-powered HVAC system, and accessibility upgrades. Thanks to the 2019 levy and other funding sources, the Northeast and Southwest branches also received electric HVAC upgrades to provide air conditioning during summer months.

"It's a great space for people to study or read or come together without having to buy anything ... It's the most democratic space we have."

- Christine, a Green Lake patron

**Investing in collections:** In 2024, the levy funded 47% of our collections budget. We added over 45,000 titles and nearly 100,000 copies to our e-book and e-audiobook collections. We made changes that helped us manage high costs for e-books while responding to increasing patron interest in this format. We also added over 168,000 items to our physical collection, including 19,000 copies of Peak Picks, the no-holds, no wait collection that is 100% levy funded. Since that collection's launch in 2017, Peak Picks titles have been checked out over a million times.

**Building community and connection.** Our Social Services team, created in 2022 and supported in part by levy funds, piloted new programs in 2024 to help our most vulnerable patrons meet basic needs and find community and connection. The team held three resource fairs and 35 Coffee and Conversations events. The team helped community members over 1,100 times, including referrals to lifeline services, and provided training and support for Library staff throughout the system.

**A new strategic plan:** In November 2024, the Library Board adopted a 10-year strategic plan, informed by a levy-funded, multi-year process that engaged dozens of community organizations, hundreds of Library patrons, Library staff, and other invested parties. The plan seeks to help the Library build the community's sense of belonging and the organization's resiliency. It identifies steps the Library will take to address 21st century challenges and improve community outcomes. It also lays the groundwork for developing a 2026 Library Levy proposal. In December, we made the plan [available on our website](#) and produced a [video](#) to help explain the plan to the public. In early 2025, we'll launch



versions of the web page and video in Spanish, Chinese (both Simplified and Traditional), and Vietnamese. In the future, we will update the webpage to highlight progress we are making on the goals set out in the plan.

## LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: HOURS & ACCESS

### Stabilizing open hours and increasing access

The Hours and Access category of the 2019 Levy supports operating hours at our 27 libraries; community access to Library learning programs and services; and citywide community outreach and engagement. Many elements of this levy category relate to increasing access to Library resources. We achieve this through various efforts, such as eliminating late fees, adding open hours, and creating new access points like our holds pick up lockers. Total levy spending in 2024 for the Hours and Access category was \$13.9 million.

#### A cyberattack disrupts library services

In late May, the Library experienced an event that disrupted much of our work during the summer months. Over Memorial Day weekend, our IT team discovered the Library was the target of a ransomware attack. We took most systems offline to contain the attack and collaborated with external cybersecurity experts, law enforcement, and city officials to plan a phased restoration and recovery process. During the restoration process, which completed after Labor Day, we kept staff and patrons informed with the help of alternative communication methods, such as print newsletters, our Shelf Talk blog, and our social media channels. We responded to many media requests – there have been over 80 news stories about the event to date.

“Thank you so much for your hard work to get everything restored. I knew I loved the Library, but seeing how much I miss it really drives it home.”

- Library patron

Despite limited access to the technology that supports our operations, Library branches remained open, and staff provided solutions to maintain services, including manual checkouts, new offline programs, and support in finding alternative resources elsewhere in the community. We encouraged patrons to keep their materials until further notice, and extended patron due dates until we could reactivate our processing systems. Some resources, such as Kanopy, were restored almost immediately. Access to e-books and e-audiobooks through OverDrive/Libby was restored less than three weeks after the incident.

Community support was strong throughout our recovery, with patrons adapting to disruptions and expressing appreciation for the Library's efforts. The Library worked with digital forensics specialists to assess potential data impacts, notify affected individuals, and complete an after-action review to evaluate the Library's response to the incident and improve future cybersecurity measures. Findings are expected to be publicly shared by the end of Q1 2025.



## **Challenges in keeping libraries open**

The 2019 Library Levy promised expanded hours above 2019 levels. The Library took a first step toward expanded hours in January 2020 by adding an additional hour to each neighborhood branch library every Sunday. In March 2020, all libraries were ordered to be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

After several years of related challenges, the Library was able to restore open hours to pre-pandemic levels in early 2023. The Library was open more hours in that year than any year since 2009, and we were finally making progress on our levy promise of increasing hours.

But 2024 brought new challenges. We were open nearly 18,000 hours in Q1, 7% more than in 2019. This increased community access to Library collections, information services, computers, printers, programming, and public spaces. But by the end of Q1, we began to experience staffing challenges due to a budget-induced hiring freeze. The Library's hiring freeze was implemented in tandem with a citywide hiring freeze to address 2025 budget challenges anticipated by the City.

By March 2024, staffing shortages led to unexpected closure days for some branches. In April, to stabilize hours, the Library reduced scheduled hours by 13% from the Q1 schedule and 7% from the 2019 baseline. In the summer, we implemented a schedule that minimized heat-related closures and stabilized operations to significantly reduce unexpected closure days.

As we worked to address potential 2025 budget challenges with the City of Seattle, we were able to begin hiring some additional staff. By late September, we implemented a new fall hours schedule that increased the number of open hours systemwide by 6% to 1,360 hours per week. When the Green Lake Branch reopened in Q4, the Library was operating at 99% of our 2019 hours. (See Appendix 1.)

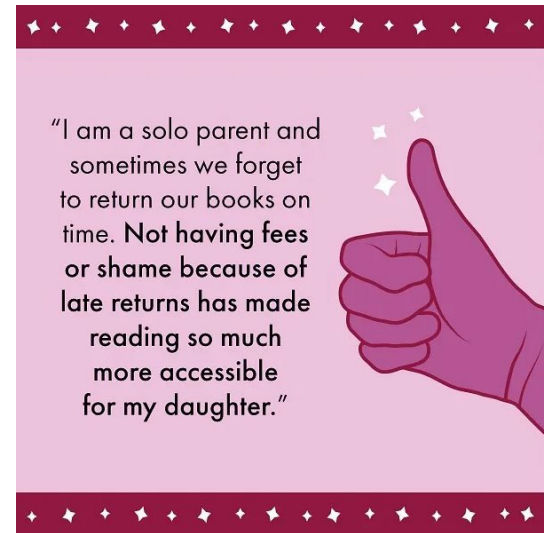
We also began planning for a significant increase in hours for late January 2025, including ensuring all library branches were open at least six days a week, and providing at least one weekend day at every location, which reflected patron preferences since the pandemic.

## **Five years of fine-free borrowing**

The levy supports improving access to Library services for everyone, especially those who face barriers to using Library resources. Thanks to the levy, the Library eliminated late fines In January 2020, restoring Library access to 18,000 patrons who had their accounts previously suspended

due to fines. Since the change, contrary to what some expected, return rates have, on average, not changed. We have even seen a slight decrease in the number of items that are never returned.

Our patrons have shared many stories about the difference that fine-free borrowing has made for them. Parents appreciate that they can keep picture books for their kids a couple of extra days without financial repercussions; people who have trouble getting to the library during open hours worry less, too. One patron who is insecurely housed shared that “I can use the Library without worrying about what financial consequences might come with uncertain life situations.”



The Library has increased access in other ways over the last five years. Physical materials now renew automatically up to three times if no one else has placed a hold. For those facing financial hardship, the Library offers assistance with lost-item fees, including a one-time waiver for teens and young adults, funded by The Seattle Public Library Foundation, and payment plans for others.

We offer 24/7 pickup lockers at seven locations so that holds are available even when we are closed. A new pick-up locker was added at the Ballard Branch in 2024 thanks to funds from the Washington State Department of Commerce. These lockers provide access to holds when branches are closed, helping us deliver on our levy promise of more materials when patrons want them.

## Increasing safety

Keeping patrons and staff safe in our spaces is an important aspect of access. The Library experiences security incidents in and around our buildings, from Rules of Conduct violations to after-hours incidents outside our buildings. To respond to security challenges, the Library has added more security officers over the last five years. The levy now funds eight of the Library's 21 security positions, four more than were funded in the 2012 levy. This has helped the Library more effectively respond to safety issues and to better weather normal levels of staff turnover.

Our security team conducted nearly 5,000 branch patrols in 2024, including both overnight and early morning patrols at high-incident branches to ensure our buildings were clean and safe before opening. In 2025, the Library will conduct a security assessment to inform how best to upgrade security infrastructure, including possibly adding cameras at the Central Library and select branches that experience a high number of incidents. The Library is also working to modify how it deploys security officers to improve the responsiveness of our security operations.

## In-person and virtual programs and services

In 2024, the Library offered over 4,500 programs, including 2,500 programs for children and youth, which provided education, connection, and inspiration to our young patrons and their caregivers. During the Library's ransomware recovery, our in-person programs continued to run without disruption. Attendance for all programs in 2024 was more than 105,000.

**Early learning.** The Library continued to expand early learning programs and has almost doubled our story time offerings since relaunching the program in April 2023. More than 1,000 story times were held in 2024 at Library locations and in the community, with attendance of over 36,000. We also held over 290 Play and Learn sessions, a levy-funded program described in more detail in the Children's Programming section of this report.

**Homework Help:** With the help of 189 adult volunteers, we offered 20 Homework Help sessions per week at nine branches during the school year. Ninety percent of Homework Help students reported their parents speak a language other than English at home, and most students served by the program are youth of color. We saw a total attendance of over 6,000 at 648 Homework Help sessions in 2024.

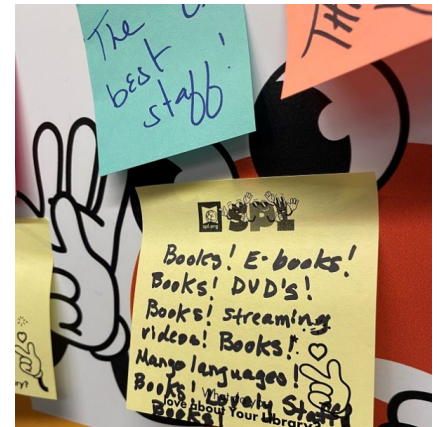
**Tax Help:** Last spring, the Library once again offered in-person Tax Help sessions in partnership with United Way of King County, AARP and PMI Savvy at the Central Library and 11 branch locations. Together, we offered 259 Tax Help sessions, and people filed over 4,000 tax returns at Library locations.

**Summer of Learning:** We celebrated our 105th annual Summer of Learning program with the theme "Free to Read," which encouraged children and families to explore the freedom of reading diverse stories and learning about new topics, people, and experiences. To complement the program, we created multilingual downloadable materials, available online or at local branches throughout the summer, including game boards and reading trackers. In 2024, we also held our first in-person Summer of Learning programs since 2019, including magic shows, jazz performances, and dance parties.

**Seattle Reads and other cultural programs:** With support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation, the Library hosted over 50 author events at the Central Library and other locations in 2024. From April to June, we offered more than 20 programs related to Seattle Reads, the Library's citywide book group, featuring "The Parable of the Sower" by Octavia Butler, a writer with local roots and global influence. The Library hosted many other community events, including a robust artist-in-residence program. We also held the first naturalization ceremony at the Central Library auditorium since 2019.

**Meeting rooms:** The Levy also helps support the use of community meeting spaces, which are free at our 26 neighborhood branches and available for a modest fee at the Central Library downtown. In 2024, meeting rooms were booked 10,000 times by Library staff, Library partners, community nonprofits, public agencies, elected officials, school groups, book clubs, and other community members.

**“What do you love about your library?”** Our 2024 Library Card Sign-up Month campaign, which began in September, coincided with the last services coming back online after the cyberattack, which inspired our theme, “Welcome Back to Your Library.” We placed multiple ads around the city in multiple languages and engaged patrons with an interactive display in each branch, inviting patrons to write their answers to the question “What do you love about Your Library?” on sticky notes. We received more than 600 comments.



## **Building community and connection for vulnerable patrons**

Our Social Services team includes a Social Services librarian, a senior community resource specialist, and a levy-funded community resource specialist who focuses on services for youth and young adults up to age 26. This team provides expertise to the Library on social service resources, coordinates with other providers, supports staff in de-escalation and trauma-informed practices, and assists patrons in need. The team meets regularly with Library staff throughout the system to share information and engage in problem solving.

In 2024, the team logged over 1,100 interactions with patrons and provided over 300 referrals for shelter. Other frequent questions related to housing stability, library resources, employment, transportation, and public benefits. The team also supported 43 patrons in acute crisis.

Much of the team’s work focuses on building community and connection. In 2024, the team held 35 Coffee & Conversations events at the Central Library with attendance exceeding 1,500. They also supported weekly Young Adult Drop-Ins at the Central Library and launched a new weekly Crafternoon program, with 300 attendees in nine sessions. One participant said, “I look forward to this all week!”

The team also collaborated with colleagues to host three resource fairs, including the first-ever Young Adult Resource Fair at the Central Library and the first resource fair at the Lake City Branch. They offered eight harm reduction and overdose prevention events for the community.

Partnerships are essential to the team's work. In 2024, they supported Seattle Housing Authority housing voucher information and waitlist enrollment sessions; ORCA LIFT enrollment events; Community Health Access Program events; and vaccine clinics. Through the Seattle Department of Transportation's Transportation Access Program (TAP), the team distributed over 20,000 bus tickets in 2024, as well as over 1,000 pre-loaded ORCA cards. A new partnership between the NewHolly Branch and FareStart's Mobile Community Market brought farm-fresh food to communities without robust access and provided \$25 produce vouchers.



FareStart Mobile Market at the NewHolly Branch

## LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: COLLECTIONS

### Building robust collections in print and digital formats

The 2019 Levy commits resources to maintain and expand the Library's collection of physical and digital materials. The levy includes funding for e-books, e-audiobooks and streaming services; continuation of Peak Picks; and funds to support the acquisition and digitization of local history items. In 2024, the 2019 Levy funded \$6.2 million, or 47% of our 2024 Collections spending, including \$4.8 million for books and materials.

We added over 45,000 titles and nearly 100,000 copies to our e-book and e-audiobook collections in 2024, and over 168,000 items to our physical collection. Our digital and physical collections now contain 2.9 million items.





Due in part to cyberattack disruptions, total checkouts declined by about 19% from 13.4 million in 2023 to 10.8 million in 2024. E-materials — including e-books, e-audiobooks, streaming services, and digital Special Collections — accounted for 6.3 million (58%) of total checkouts.

## Digital collections reaching more people

In recent years, the Library has increased our investment in our e-book and e-audiobook to meet patron interest. Since 2013, annual checkouts of e-books and e-audiobooks have grown from one million to 5.4 million in 2024. Just since 2019, the Library has nearly doubled the size of our digital book collection, to over a million items in 2024. In 2023, OverDrive reported that the Library was eighth in the world for digital book checkouts.

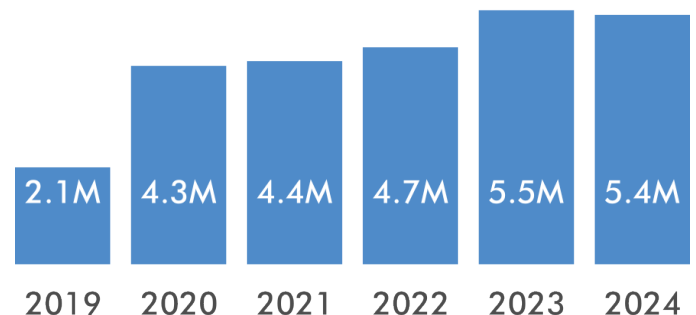
The Library is committed to providing materials in the format that best suits our patrons, but the cost of purchasing e-books has become increasingly unsustainable. While consumers pay the same or less for a digital version of a book, libraries are charged three to five times more. Moreover, each copy of a digital book title requires a purchase of a license, and the most common license needs to be purchased and then repurchased every year.

In March 2024, to help manage costs for digital books and ensure a broad and diverse collection all year, the Library [reduced the number of maximum holds](#) on digital books from 25 to 10. Patron holds are the single biggest factor in rising costs, because the Library buys additional licenses of a digital title when patrons place more holds on it.

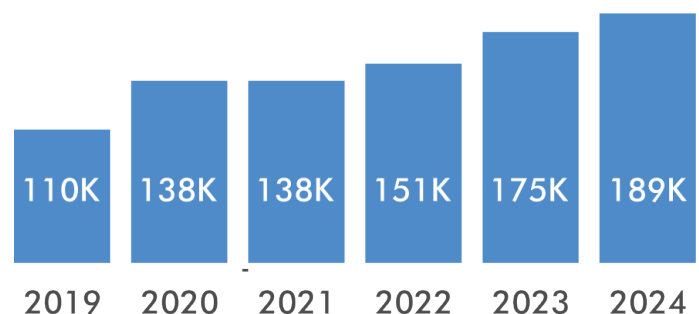
Understanding 2024 trends is complicated by the cyberattack, which took e-books offline for almost three weeks and paused our ability to purchase new digital copies for two months. The Library spent \$2.4 million in 2024 to fulfill holds placed on popular titles, which represented about 50% of total OverDrive spending, a decline compared to 2023, when the Library spent almost \$3 million on high-demand titles, or 62% of our OverDrive spending.

The number of Library patrons checking out e-books and e-audiobooks increased by 8% in 2024, from 175,000 to over 188,500, while the number of digital book checkouts declined slightly from 5.5 million to 5.4 million. Cardholders through our privately funded Books Unbanned program, teens and young adults from every state in the country who can access our digital book collection for free, represented 8,255 of these borrowers and 249,000 of these checkouts.

**Count of e-book checkouts**



**Count of patrons who checked out e-books**



In 2024, we also used levy funds to expand our digital World Language Collection. We acquired 1,450 copies of e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and more than 650 copies for children in 11 languages. In Q4 alone, we added 661 titles for adults, 192 titles for teens, and 181 titles for children. We also expanded the Library's digital language learning collection, adding more than 450 titles and nearly 950 copies covering 38 languages. We also added 170 titles and over 300 copies of digital books for patrons learning or practicing the English language.

## Building physical collections and increasing language offerings

Patrons checked out more than 1.3 million physical items in Q4 and 4.5 million physical items throughout the year. Nearly 120,000 people checked out physical Library materials in 2024, compared to about 124,000 in 2023. We added over 168,000 physical items to our collection using funds from all sources. [Peak Picks](#), the Library's popular no-holds, no-wait collection of high-interest titles is funded by the levy and is our most popular physical collection. In 2024, we added 114 Peak Picks titles and over 19,000 copies, including 29 new titles and 4,800 copies in Q4 alone. Q4 highlights included Louise Erdrich's "The Mighty Red," the quarter's most popular Peak Pick, and Samantha Harvey's 2024 Booker Prize winning novel, "Orbital."

### Top 10 Peak Picks for 2024

1. "The Kamogawa Food Detectives," by Hisashi Kashiwai
2. "James," by Percival Everett
3. "The Paris Novel," by Ruth Reichl
4. "Wandering Stars," by Tommy Orange
5. "Slow Productivity," by Cal Newport
6. "Supercommunicators," by Charles Duhigg
7. "The Backyard Bird Chronicles," Amy Tan
8. "Rental Person Who Does Nothing," by Shoji Morimoto
9. "Come and Get It," by Kiley Reid
10. "The Berry Pickers," by Amanda Peters

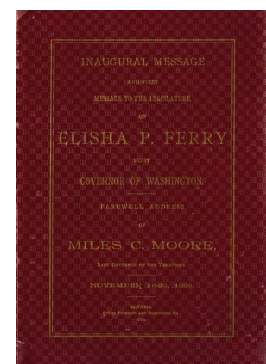
Annual checkouts for Peak Picks were 112,000 in 2024, a decline from 2023 due to the cyberattack. But the collection reached an important milestone in the spring when it surpassed one million total checkouts since its launch in 2017.

We increased language access in our physical collection, adding over 4,000 titles and 13,000 copies in 15 languages. We also expanded Spanish language books to all branches. This work, in part, is responsive to a levy-funded collection diversity audit we conducted in 2022 and 2023.

## Expanding our local history collections and making them more accessible

The Seattle Room, located at the Central Library, provides in-person access to treasured local history items, while our digital Seattle Room collections make Seattle history easier to access for students, researchers, historians, and others. The Seattle Room curator and Special Collections digital librarian positions are both funded by the levy, and the levy pays for acquisitions.

In 2024, the Library acquired more than 1,000 physical items for the Seattle Room collection, including local manuscripts, menus, photos, postcards, books, and more. Notable additions included two rare



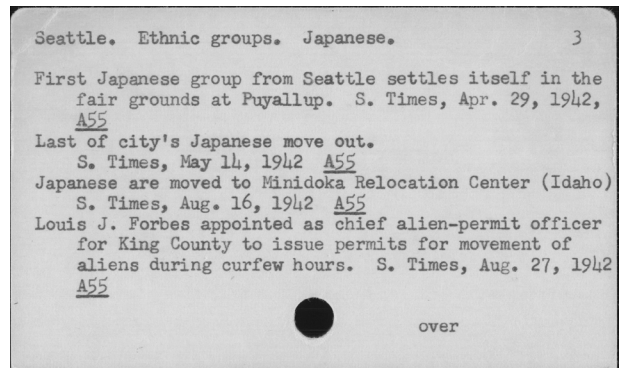
Cover of Elisha Ferry's autographed 1889 Inaugural Address



1950s copies of Bamboo, a short-lived magazine about Filipino life in Seattle; official 19th century reports on local Native American tribes by U.S. Indian agents; and a signed copy of the 1889 inaugural address of Washington State's first governor, Elisha Ferry.

Special Collections staff also hosted 450 research appointments for patrons accessing collections and resources in the Seattle Room. We added 3,800 digitized local history items to our digital special collections, for a total of over 30,000 digital items. The Special Collections team added digital archives of the [Northwest Asian Weekly](#), which covered news impacting the region's Asian American community between 1983 and 2023, and 1,500 issues of [Marine Digest](#), an important source of maritime news that started in 1922. We also introduced first scans from the impressive [Paul Dorpat Collection](#) and made progress on digitizing "Ethnic Groups" cards from our [Northwest Subject Index](#), which provide citations to publications documenting news related to Seattle's diverse communities. This work helps preserve local history for all communities who have called Seattle home.

Nearly 40,000 unique users visited our digital Special Collections over 53,500 times, accumulating 377,000 pageviews, in 2024.



"Ethnic Groups" card scanned from Northwest Subject Index

## LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: TECHNOLOGY

### Keeping our technology up to date

The 2019 Levy promises around technology include dedicated funding for digital equity offerings; replacing infrastructure for public internet access; replacing outdated technology for acquisition and circulation; and maintaining and upgrading public technologies and the spl.org website. The levy funded \$3 million of operating expenses related to technology and online services in 2024 and \$764,000 of technology capital spending.

## Digital equity and the HotSpot circulation program

The 2019 Levy is the primary funding source for our [HotSpot program](#), which provides internet access through our general collection and targeted outreach with community organizations.

The Library's 850 Wi-Fi hot spots, among the most popular items in our collection, were checked out over 5,400 times in 2024. In Q4 2024, we began to upgrade our hot spots to a new 5G model, which will provide faster and more stable access to our patrons.

With our outreach hot spot program, we continued our work with partners to open pathways to opportunities with communities in our city. Through 14 partnerships, the Outreach HotSpot Team checked out 285 hot spots to people disproportionately impacted by the digital divide in alignment with data highlighted by the City of Seattle's Technology and Access Study. Equipped with a community of support, Library-provided internet access, and relevant information and resources, participants took action to move toward their personal and collective goals.

In 2024, we shifted to lending periods that varied based on the duration of a program. For example, Spanish-language students learning computer skills through Villa Comunitaria classes held at the Delridge Branch borrowed Library hot spots for the three-month duration of the program. Tiny House Villages and shelters had one-year checkout periods to ensure that residents had ongoing access to Library resources.

Library staff across the city engaged in outreach activities throughout the year with hot spot program partners. They visited digital skills classes, shelters and partner events; built relationships; and helped people access their library in ways that were most relevant to them. As the Library navigated the impacts of the ransomware event, outreach staff shared updates with patrons regarding available Library services, and alternative low-cost access to the internet.

Over the year, participants and partners shared success stories highlighting what they were able to do with the support of the outreach hot spot program, including participating in ESOL, citizenship, job readiness and GED classes online; getting one-on-one tutoring; accessing E-books; contacting family; paying bills; checking in with case managers; accessing news online; and looking for work.



Isabel, a Villa Comunitaria student, was able to take a Library hot spot home in the course of the computer class to practice new skills.

## Maintaining access to technology and improving cybersecurity

Patron access to technology services in 2024 was significantly disrupted by the ransomware attack from late May through Labor Day. But even with that disruption, we facilitated 240,000 public computing sessions and patrons printed 1.5 million pages using Library technology, slightly less than in 2023 (1.7 million pages).

Usage of ScanEZ stations, which offer free faxing and scanning as well as translation at all locations, grew by almost 15% from 2023 to 2024, from 263,000 to 308,000 pages.



In the wake of the ransomware attack, the Library accelerated a number of efforts to improve our cybersecurity, including moving systems to the cloud and implementing multifactor authentication systemwide. We also began the process of hiring a new cybersecurity analyst to lead the development of a more mature cybersecurity program at the Library.

We made significant progress on a levy-funded project to develop a new Library app that will make it easier for our patrons to manage their accounts and find out about Library programs and events. The app is expected to launch publicly in early- to mid-2025.

The 2019 Levy includes \$4 million to support the replacement of the existing Integrated Library System (ILS), which helps libraries manage book catalogs, checkouts, patron accounts, and other services in one centralized system. The work is expected to begin in early 2025.

We continued to upgrade and shift our technology offerings to serve changing community needs. We replaced 258 public PCs in 2024, upgraded and deployed new and improved credit card readers for printing, finished the final upgrade of network switches for the Central Library, and finished the final upgrade of core networking equipment.

## LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: SUPPORTING CHILDREN

### Expanding early learning options for children

The 2019 Levy promised additional support for Library early learning programs for children ages 0 to 5, providing about \$420,000 to support this effort in 2024.

A key element of our early learning programs supported by the levy is the Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program. This program provides drop-in neighborhood-based play groups for the Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver (FFN) community. Early childhood educators and trained community members facilitate weekly 90-minute sessions for children between the ages of birth to 5. Parents, caregivers, and children are guided through a variety of developmental activities, including open-ended play, circle time, and sharing. The Library provides meeting room space, access to group supplies, and financial support to local community-based groups who facilitate these sessions.

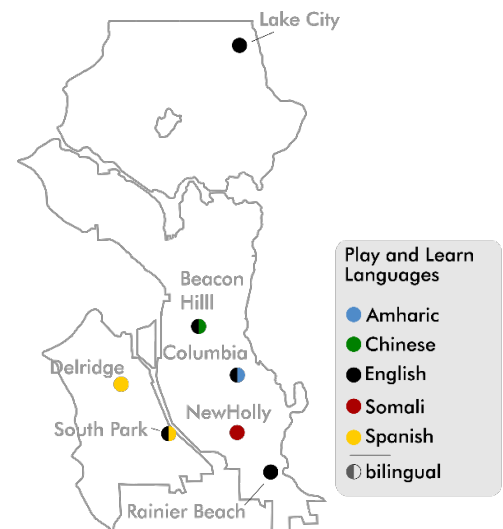
We currently offer seven weekly Play and Learn programs at the Beacon Hill, Columbia, Delridge, Lake City, NewHolly, Rainier Beach, and South Park branches, exceeding our levy commitment to fund up to six weekly sessions at branch locations. In 2024, over 290 levy-funded Play and Learn sessions were held at these branches, with attendance of over 7,600. Most programs operate year-round, except for the groups at the Delridge and South Park branches, which follow the Seattle Public Schools calendar. Most programs were bilingual or were offered in a language other than English, including Amharic, Chinese, Somali or Spanish.

Each year, BrightSpark, the umbrella organization that administers the Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program, evaluates survey responses from program participants from all Play and Learn programs in King County. In 2024, more than 82% of respondents reported an increased understanding that play helps children develop school readiness skills and 92% reported that they feel more supported as a parent or caregiver in their community. 85% reported they were having more discussions with their children about numbers, shapes, and sizes.



Play and Learn facilitator. Photo courtesy of Denise Louie Education Center

#### Program Locations and Languages





In the survey, caregivers also shared comments about the benefits of Play and Learn. One respondent wrote that their child, who had a speech delay due to apraxia, improved her everyday speech and confidence “more than I could ever imagine this year and a lot of it seems to have stemmed from her having time with her peers through Play and Learn.”

## LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: MAINTENANCE

### Protecting our investments

The 2019 Levy promised to maintain Library buildings, preserve funding for major maintenance, and add resources to undertake seismic retrofits for the [historic Columbia, Green Lake, and University branches](#). The 2024 revised levy budget included \$2.3 million for routine maintenance and \$17.2 million for major maintenance and seismic retrofits from the 2019 levy. An additional \$250,000 from the 2012 levy was also available to support major maintenance. In 2024, the Library spent \$1.7 million on routine maintenance and \$5.25 million on major maintenance and seismic work. The Library spent \$130,000 of the 2012 levy funds.

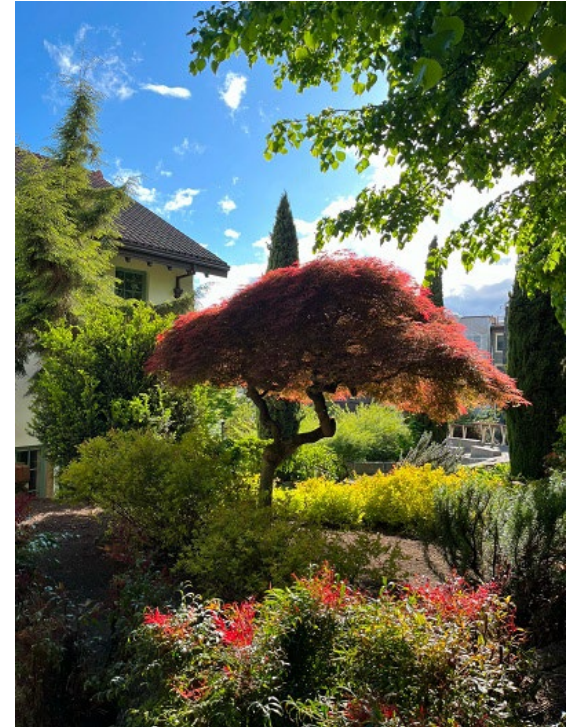
### Routine maintenance: Keeping our facilities and grounds clean and safe

Keeping Library facilities clean, safe, and accessible are important levy priorities. The Library’s janitorial/custodial and facilities teams were busy in 2024 responding to work order requests across our 27 locations.

Despite remaining understaffed, the janitorial/custodial team responded to over 1,800 work order requests, with 550 in Q4, mostly related to restroom cleaning and maintenance, including the removal of biological hazards and fixing clogged toilets and sinks.

The facilities team completed nearly 4,100 work order requests in 2024 (1,200 in Q4), including graffiti removal, cleaning roofs and gutters, fixing fences, repairing carpeting and furniture, cleaning up after events, replacing lighting, and much more.

The team also responded to 5,000 work orders for scheduled preventative maintenance, with approximately 1,250 of those work orders coming in Q4. These work orders reflect a wide range of routine but important maintenance, from pressure washing branch grounds to scheduling inspections of critical fire and life-safety systems and overseeing needed repairs.



Our facilities team maintains Library grounds such as this Fremont Branch landscape. Photo by Matthew Roland.

Multiple repairs were performed on the Ballard Branch garage door due to damage from cars running into the gate. Glass along the north side of the Central Library, which was damaged due to vandalism, was replaced.

## **Major maintenance: Preserving libraries for the next generation**

The year's most significant capital improvement was the completion of the Green Lake Branch renovation project. After an 18-month closure for a seismic retrofit and significant renovations, the branch reopened on October 28 with a [press conference and public celebration](#) that drew city leaders and patrons to visit and tour the remodeled spaces.

The renovations updated the historically landmarked branch while preserving its historic features. Updates included a seismic retrofit to keep patrons safe during an earthquake; an electric HVAC system to reduce carbon emissions and provide air conditioning; a new elevator and exterior ramp to increase accessibility; new and improved restrooms; meeting rooms and other interior changes to provide more usable space for patrons. It is expected to reduce carbon output by an estimated 20-30 metric tons each year.



Patrons enjoy the newly remodeled Green Lake Branch.

The Library Levy funded 65% of the Green Lake Branch renovation, while the Real Estate Excise Tax and Payroll Expense Tax revenue (18%) and a Washington State commerce grant (18%) provided the rest.

The University Branch is now closed through 2026 for similar upgrades. Construction began March 3, 2025. The Columbia Branch is also slated for the same improvements, and we are still working to determine construction dates.

The Library continues to make progress on adding modern HVAC systems to all locations, reflecting our commitment to providing patrons and the community with refuge from heat and wildfire smoke, preventing heat-related schedule disruptions and closures, and reducing our carbon footprint. Thanks to the levy and other funding sources, two additional branches – the Northeast and Southwest branches -- offered air conditioning to patrons during the summer of 2024. The Northeast Branch HVAC project completed in early 2024, and the Southwest Branch in 2023.

The Library continued the final stages of an HVAC/electrification project at the Capitol Hill Branch, which began in 2023 and will be completed in Q2 2025.

Partial funding for the remaining HVAC/electrification projects at the Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne, University, and West Seattle is included in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant (awarded in mid-2024), for which the Library had applied in 2022. The \$5.2 million FEMA grant will not cover the entire cost of each project, so timing of these projects will depend upon supplemental funding decisions. Additionally, there is a possibility that the FEMA grant may be affected by federal funding changes that began in early 2025.

The Library continues to pursue additional federal and state funding opportunities to supplement levy funding for these projects. But applying for, monitoring, and reporting on federal and state funding requires significant staff time and resources, and often very specific technical expertise, which can be beyond current Library staff capacity. Timeliness of funding decisions varies and is dependent upon political factors beyond the Library's control.

Failure to secure adequate federal and state grants may result in insufficient resources for the seismic retrofit of the Columbia Branch. Much will depend on the project's ultimate scope and cost estimate.

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## Risks, opportunities and the path ahead:

As you'll read in our 2025 first quarter report, our staff continue to adapt, enhance, and launch services and programs. Here's a quick preview:

- Implementing the Library's new 10-year Strategic Plan
  - Expanding open hours
  - Beginning construction on the University Branch seismic project
  - Managing e-book and e-audiobook demand
  - Launching a new Library app
  - Integrated Library System development
-



## 2024 Financials

The 2019 Levy accounts for \$50.3 million (36.4%) of the Library's total revised 2024 budget of \$138.4 million. The Library spent \$31.7 million in funds from the 2019 Levy and \$0.1 million in funds from the 2012 Levy. The Library spent 63% of the revised budget from the 2019 Levy and 9% from the 2012 Levy. Underspensing was largely due to delays in implementing the major maintenance and technology capital programs.

Spending tables below show the 2024 Operations Plan Budget plus encumbrances and unspent budget authority from prior years in the revised budget columns. Carryover budget authority of \$17.7 million from the 2019 levy and nearly \$363,000 from the 2012 levy is available for spending in 2024. The revised 2024 budget also includes a \$1.5 million supplemental increase associated with wage adjustments per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (2023 retroactive 5% wage increase; 2024 4.5% wage increase).

|                                    |                   | 2024              |                   |                   |            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 2019 Levy                          | Operations Plan   | Revised Budget    | 2024 Expenditures | Available         | % Spent    |
| Hours & Access                     | 13,692,000        | 14,951,420        | 13,948,924        | 1,002,497         | 93%        |
| Collections                        | 5,931,000         | 5,919,469         | 6,163,933         | (244,464)         | 104%       |
| Technology & Online Services       | 2,670,000         | 2,666,135         | 2,969,964         | (303,830)         | 111%       |
| Children's Programming             | 381,000           | 420,309           | 420,250           | 59                | 100%       |
| Routine Maintenance                | 1,947,000         | 2,285,171         | 1,673,883         | 611,287           | 73%        |
| Administration                     | 573,000           | 582,731           | 471,931           | 110,801           | 81%        |
| Major Maintenance & Technology CIP | 5,859,000         | 23,520,884        | 6,023,200         | 17,497,685        | 26%        |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>31,053,000</b> | <b>50,346,120</b> | <b>31,672,084</b> | <b>18,674,035</b> | <b>63%</b> |

|                              | Revised Budget | 2024 Expenditures | Available      | % Spent    |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|------------|
| 2012 Levy                    |                |                   |                |            |
| Technology & Online Services | 98,932         | 98,932            | -              | 100%       |
| Routine Maintenance          | 9,250          | 9,250             | -              | 100%       |
| Major Maintenance CIP        | 254,878        | 21,917            | 232,961        | 9%         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>363,060</b> | <b>130,099</b>    | <b>232,961</b> | <b>36%</b> |

## Appendix 1. Scheduled weekly hours in 2024 compared to 2019 baseline

| Location                                | 2019 | Jan 1 - Mar 4 | Mar 5 - Apr 11 | Apr 12 - Jun 18 | Jun 19 - Sep 24* | Sep 25 - Dec 31 |
|---|------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Ballard Branch                          | 60   | 62            | 62             | 62              | 62               | 62              |
| Beacon Hill Branch                      | 60   | 56            | 56             | 52              | 56               | 56              |
| Broadview Branch                        | 60   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 54               | 54              |
| Capitol Hill Branch                     | 60   | 62            | 62             | 52              | 60               | 60              |
| Central Library                         | 62   | 62            | 62             | 62              | 62               | 62              |
| Columbia Branch                         | 60   | 56            | 56             | 48              | 48               | 56              |
| Delridge Branch                         | 39   | 56            | 56             | 56              | 48               | 48              |
| Douglass-Truth Branch                   | 60   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 62               | 60              |
| Fremont Branch                          | 39   | 48            | 48             | 40              | 40               | 40              |
| Green Lake Branch*                      | 39   | CLOSED        | CLOSED         | CLOSED          | CLOSED           | 48              |
| Greenwood Branch                        | 60   | 62            | 62             | 62              | 62               | 62              |
| High Point Branch                       | 46   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 58               | 56              |
| International District/Chinatown Branch | 46   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 46               | 48              |
| Lake City Branch                        | 60   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 54               | 62              |
| Madrona-Sally Goldmark Branch           | 39   | 48            | 48             | 32              | 32               | 40              |
| Magnolia Branch                         | 39   | 48            | 48             | 40              | 40               | 40              |
| Montlake Branch                         | 39   | 48            | 48             | 32              | 37               | 40              |
| NewHolly Branch                         | 39   | 56            | 56             | 48              | 40               | 48              |
| Northeast Branch                        | 60   | CLOSED        | 56             | 48              | 48               | 48              |
| Northgate Branch                        | 60   | 60            | 56             | 48              | 40               | 48              |
| Queen Anne Branch                       | 39   | 48            | 48             | 40              | 40               | 40              |
| Rainier Beach Branch                    | 60   | 56            | 56             | 52              | 56               | 56              |
| South Park Branch                       | 46   | 62            | 62             | 54              | 62               | 58              |
| Southwest Branch                        | 60   | 56            | 56             | 48              | 48               | 48              |
| University Branch                       | 46   | 48            | 48             | 48              | 40               | 40              |
| Wallingford Branch                      | 39   | 56            | 56             | 40              | 40               | 40              |
| West Seattle Branch                     | 60   | 56            | 56             | 48              | 48               | 48              |
| <b>Total Weekly Hours</b>               | 1377 | 1416          | 1468           | 1282            | 1283             | 1368            |
| <b>% of 2019 baseline</b>               |      | <b>103%</b>   | <b>107%</b>    | <b>93%</b>      | <b>93%</b>       | <b>99%</b>      |

\* Green Lake opened Oct. 28, 2024