



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1100

August 10, 2021

Brian J. Wilson, City Manager
City of Burien
400 SW 152nd Street, Suite 300
Burien, Washington 98166
brianw@burienwa.gov

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Subject: Response to concerns regarding the siting of a work release facility in King County (Cities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, and SeaTac)

Thank you for your July 20 letter regarding work release expansion efforts in King County. The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates hearing from you about your support for the goal of siting a work release facility in King County and your recognition of the benefits the work release program provides for persons in their transition from life in prison to life in the community. I'd like to address the concerns you expressed regarding the siting process.

Public participation

As referenced in your letter, through [RCW 72.65.220](#), the Washington State Legislature has provided clear statutory direction that the department “shall establish a process for *early and continuous public participation*” to establish a work release facility. As you are aware, our department’s efforts at work release expansion [public participation meetings](#) began in October 2019 and occurred on a continuous, near monthly basis until the pandemic curtailed the meetings for approximately seven months and then promptly resumed. Through the public meeting process in King County, people were invited, via publicly posted notices, to attend the public meetings and participate as Local Advisory Committee (LAC) members. LAC members are encouraged to provide written and oral comments during the meeting and throughout the process. The King County LAC is an open group and additional persons may participate as LAC members should they express in interest in doing so and they agree to the roles and activities as set forth and agreed to by others who have agreed to take on this important community role. The roles and activities are:

- Act in the best interest of public;
- Develop an understanding of the community’s concerns and sensitivities;
- Active engagement and regular attendance throughout siting process;
- Have an accurate understanding of the department’s role, charge and limitations;

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- Advocate for the work release program and sites within your community; and,
- Support the work release program's mission and activities.

In December 2019, a statewide request for proposals (RFP) was released to solicit the public for work release sites. The department did not receive any proposals for sites in King County. To date, each monthly LAC meeting was conducted with a reminder to please assist in identifying potentially viable sites for evaluation. Persons in attendance at the LAC meetings can attest to the fact that identifying additional sites for consideration has been a recurring theme, and the written minutes, which are publicly posted, reflects this ongoing action item request.

Candidate site selection

As potential sites have been identified for evaluation, local elected officials, such as yourselves, have been informed and invited to join the process. Such notification with the SeaTac site was [acknowledged by the City of SeaTac in June 2020](#) and has also been the case with other sites which have been discussed during LACs. Members of the public have always been, and continue to be, welcome to attend these monthly meetings so they might gain an understanding of the program, operations and participant expectations as well as provide feedback concerning any site under evaluation. Sites in Seattle as well as south King County have been reviewed and evaluated. To that point, as of today, two new possible sites in King County are being evaluated. A [list of formally evaluated sites](#), to include King County, can be located in the Resources section of the work release siting process's publicly available webpage.

In addition to those formally evaluated, a host of other sites were informally reviewed and determined for various reasons to be unsuitable for further evaluation. Often, properties may appear suitable but are unavailable due to owner reluctance to work with the department on a site. Because the department is seeking to lease the site from a private owner, it is wholly dependent upon the owner to agree to pursue a site and willingness to agree to conditions prior to moving forward. I want to clarify that while any newly sited facility will be leased from a third party who will be responsible for improvements and maintaining the facility, the facility itself will be managed and operated by state employees, not a third party, performing all of the programmatic activities.

As your letter seemingly acknowledges, [departmental data does demonstrate that incarcerated individuals are underserved in south King County](#) and will therefore return to the area though there is not currently a work release facility affording an opportunity to stabilize those individual's return to their community.

No potential King County site under evaluation has yet been reviewed for cost of site acquisition. This step in the siting process will not take place until a site is moved from the evaluation phase to the consideration phase. At such time, the LAC will be provided acquisition costs in addition to the other information required to formally consider a site(s) and make a recommendation to the department. As mandated in [RCW 72.65.220](#), "when the department has selected three or fewer sites for final consideration," not simply under review as continues to be the case with the SeaTac site and all other King County sites to

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date, the department shall make public notification and conduct public hearings regarding the sites. Prior to the consideration phase, public notification would be premature and would serve to fuel public misperceptions as to the department's seriousness of siting intentions. The department continues to maintain transparency and providing public information through public meetings and [the dedicated work release siting expansion webpage](#).


Geographic and social equity

As you acknowledge, [essential public facilities](#), which specifically identifies state and local correctional facilities, are difficult to site and therefore the legislature has determined that each jurisdiction include and identify parcels for this purpose in its comprehensive plan. Unfortunately, as I'm sure you are also aware, not all potentially viable sites are in permissible zones and not all permissible zones contain sites that might lend themselves as viable work release sites for various reasons. The department has continued the search for properties throughout King County and the [list of evaluated sites](#) reflects that search.

Again, the department stresses the purpose and goal of the work release program is to increase the success of individuals returning to the community. We know that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) have been disproportionately sentenced to incarceration. Participation in the work release program increases success in maintaining employment, stable housing and returning to their families and community. Providing a smoother transition back to the community promotes the opportunity to achieve greater social equity and restoring community citizens in a better, more solid way.

In closing, we appreciate your support of the state's goal of siting a work release facility in King County. Similar to the [department's April 2021 response to the City of SeaTac](#), we appreciate the opportunity to continue direct engagement and information exchanges with our local partners. We look forward to your further engagement through the LAC and additional phases associated with the of the work release siting process.

Sincerely,



Julie Martin, Chief of Staff
Department of Corrections

JM:cm

Identical letters to: Michael Matthias, Amy Arrington, Carl Cole