



whatcom county  
**library system**

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Whatcom County P&DS

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Date: January 14, 2009

To: Whatcom County Planning Commission

From: Sigrid Brorson, Assistant Library Director  
 Whatcom County Library System  
 Bellingham, WA 98226  
 384-3150 ext 236 sbrorson@wcls.org

Re: Foothills Supplemental E.I.S.

The Library owns land currently in the Kendall  
 STC. The parcel number is 400534391424. As you  
 consider adopting the updated Foothills Subarea Plan, we  
 respectfully request that this parcel remain in the STC.

The Library purchased the land from the Mt. Baker School  
 District in October 2007 and has applied for and received  
 approval from WSDOT for highway access. WCLS has  
 proceeded with site development and has received  
 approval from the Whatcom County Health Department  
 for a well and septic system.

CC: Whatcom County Council  
 David Stalheim, Director  
 Whatcom County Planning and Development  
 Services





5205 Northwest Road, Bellingham, WA 98226-9092 • On the Web: <http://www.wcls.org>

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June 27, 2006

Mike McFarlane, Director, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation  
3373 Mt. Baker Hwy  
Bellingham, WA 98226

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your invitation to participate in the planning for the Resource Center being located in the Balfour development.

The WCLS Board of Trustees decided at the meeting of June 20, 2006 to send a letter to Pete Kremen, supporting the concept of building the Regional Resource Center in the Balfour development, while stating that the library cannot participate at this time. As a result of this decision, WCLS will not be participants in the planning process for the Center.

The Board believes that the Balfour location does not satisfy the following Board-identified goals and priorities for relocation of the Maple Falls Library.

1. WCLS began collaborating in the regional center development process in 2001 because the Maple Falls facility was inadequate at that time. Since then, the use of the Maple Falls library has increased 76%. With or without continued area population growth, the Maple Falls branch library space problems must be addressed and cannot wait up to seven years for a solution.
2. The objective of the Board is to locate the library where it is visible and convenient to the patrons served, coming and going from both directions. Two thirds of these patrons currently live in the Glacier, Maple Falls, and Silver Lake area. A new library site needs to serve both the east region of Glacier, Maple Falls, and Silver Lake, as well as the communities in Paradise Lakes and Peaceful Valley. That common ground is at the intersection. Yes, two miles does make a difference for a library; the communities come together at this junction, which provides visibility and convenient access for all.
3. Historically, it has been WCLS policy to listen to the community and to locate branches where the community needs are met. Input that the regional planning committee had received from community petitions and from comments heard at recent community meetings as well as those held over the past four years, also spur the Board to continue exploring the potential for locating the Maple Falls branch library closer to the junction of the highways in Kendall.
4. A relocated library within walking distance of Kendall Elementary will result in greater collaboration with the Mount Baker School District. The Board strongly believes in cultivating life-long learners – teaching children that information is available as close as the nearest library, recognizing the results of reading in studies of future academic success. In the past, all classes from the Maple Falls School made regular visits to the Maple Falls library. Now, only one grade from the Kendall School visits the Maple Falls library once a week, and this is because the Friends of the Maple Falls Library provide funds to support this.

5. The final floor plan developed by Stewart and King Architects for Whatcom County and funded through U.S. Forest Service and CTED grants, allowed 2000 square feet for the library. As documented in the Building Program Statement prepared by WCLS staff, two to three times that amount is required to meet current and projected population growth.

For the sake of meeting the needs of current students, for striving to develop a hunger for life-long learning, for rising to meet the needs of multiple communities, the WCLS Board of Trustees must investigate other options that will more adequately meet the mission, goals, and priorities of the library.

As always, the library's goal is to maintain good working relationships with all agencies and groups involved in the project, knowing that we will be partnering through outreach and other ways to serve the population together in the decades to come. We look forward to that time and trust that mutual support will continue for the future.

Sincerely,

Joan Airoidi for the WCLS Board of Trustees

Cc: Rob Bunnnett, Pete Kremen, and Dewey Dessler



April 28, 2006

**To:** Members of the Whatcom County Council  
**From:** Joan Airoidi and Board of Trustees, Whatcom County Library System  
**Subject:** Site of North Fork Regional Resource Center

As you know, the North Fork Community Resource Center Association has been dedicated to securing a site that is regional, safe, and accessible for the location of the North Fork Community Resource Center.

They have worked with the Mt. Baker School District on the site adjacent to the Kendall Fire Hall, discussing the potential advantages for both the students of the district as well as for area residents of all ages for activities and resource sharing.

The Whatcom County Library Board of Trustees strongly encourages you to support this incredible opportunity to locate a multi-agency facility, close to one of the largest schools in Whatcom County, as a statement of educational cooperation and learning as a lifelong pursuit. Class visits, after school programs, parent/student Internet training; the potential is limited only by imaginations and resources.

The Whatcom County Library Board of Trustees has been apprised of progress on the Resource Center at our monthly meetings. The Library Board's Facilities Committee studied the options and realized that the school site best meets the needs of the library community. In addition, library administration and the Maple Falls Library branch staff are extremely supportive of locating a larger and more accessible library branch on the Mt. Baker Highway, where we have the greatest chance of serving this wide geographic area. Our experience with the location of other library facilities underscores our commitment to this highly visible location.

Our primary clientele are those who have the most limited access to resources: children, senior citizens and a large population of persons living at or below the poverty level. This project is an exciting opportunity for those residents of the north county, and your support of the project, through planning, grant-seeking, and other efforts, give us great hope for the future.

We look forward to working with Whatcom County as this project moves forward. Sincere thanks to all of you for the time and work you give to Whatcom County residents.



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## Fact Sheet on the Relocation of the Maple Falls Library to the Kendall Small Town Commercial Area:

Whatcom County Library System and the Friends of the North Fork Community Library are planning to build a new, centrally located library next to the Kendall Fire Hall at the intersection of SR542 and SR547. This location is unique in its importance to the library as a visible access point for all five communities in the Kendall/North Fork area of East Whatcom County.

*This site will allow the library to join the school district and fire district at a central location that will consolidate community services shared by all communities in the Kendall/North Fork region.*

*The planning for the new library is in response to population growth and a huge increase in library use:*

- The population growth of the Kendall/North Fork area has resulted in a library circulation increase of 106% in the last five years.
- The overall library circulation increase since the Maple Falls Library opened in 1984 is 300%.

*Library standards and library users tell us we are not providing enough space:*

- Typical public library standards, including the Whatcom County Library System's Service Level Policy, state that a population the size of the Kendall/North Fork area needs a minimum 4,200 square foot facility, a minimum collection of 24,000 volumes, and up to 12 Internet stations. This estimate is based on a current population of approximately 6,000 residents and future growth projections.
- The current library facility has the use of 400 sq. ft. permanent space and moves 50 pieces of furniture twice a day into an additional 700 sq. ft. The library has 2 Internet stations, which are the only internet access for the region.



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## Why is Whatcom County Library System considering the current site?

### *In response to community feedback:*

- Local residents have encouraged the library system to look for opportunities to expand and give greater access to library services since 1999. 9 years of planning and an extensive Needs Assessment by the Whatcom County Library System included public meetings, surveys, and project presentations across the region.
- Letters to the Board of Trustees and community petitions supporting this location at the crossroads of the Kendall Rd. and Mt. Baker Hwy have also been submitted.
- In November and December 2006, there were two community meetings to plan the new library facility, and over 40 residents came together to discuss library services, building design and fundraising. Once again, there was unanimous support for the new location at the intersection.

### *To serve a wide geographic area:*

- Taking into consideration the particular needs and characteristics of these numerous Kendall/North Fork communities, and addressing them through thorough discussion, planning and design, we will provide library services at this central and easily accessible location for a wide geographic area as well as a rapidly expanding population, while maintaining a commitment to serve our current library service area east of the intersection.
- The current Maple Falls Library circulates over 40,000 items per year.
- 65% of the users come from the communities of Glacier and Maple Falls.



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**To create a closer partnership with the Mount Baker School District:**

- The location being considered is close to Kendall Elementary School. There is a particular need to focus on children and young adults, who comprise 40% of the area community as compared to 30% of the general population of Whatcom County. This location is ideal to allowing increased partnering with the Mt. Baker School District. The proximity to the Kendall Elementary School and the school's 20 acre campus will allow greater access for children, now and in the future. Children are currently bussed from the Kendall Elementary to the Maple Falls Library and the Friends are helping to subsidize these visits.

**Visibility:**

- From *The Library System Service Level Policy*: The location should be where as many people as possible in the service area can easily reach it, be on a route where the people to be served may easily combine use of the library with other activities and be highly visible

**How has public input been gathered in this process?**

**Public Meetings:**

- A Needs Assessment for library services in the Kendall/North Fork area has been an ongoing process since 1999.
- The choice of the site across the road from the Kendall Elementary School is a result of numerous public meetings dating back to 2003. There has been overwhelming support for a new and larger library facility at a central location that will serve the communities of Glacier, Maple Falls, Kendall and the Columbia Valley
- In November and December 2006, there were two community meetings to plan the new library facility, and over 40 residents came together to discuss library services, building design and fundraising. Once again, there was unanimous support for the new location at the intersection.

**Letters and Petitions:**

- Letters to the Board of Trustees and community petitions supporting this location at the crossroads of the Kendall Rd. and Mt. Baker Hwy are on file.



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## What is the vision for a new library?

For the new library is to provide a full range of library services to all community residents. The focus is serving children and young adults, providing on-site economic resources, expanding Russian language materials, and addressing issues of rural isolation and limited transportation through increased Internet access.

### ***Outreach to the Community.***

This will be accomplished through a greater percentage of space given to early childhood literacy materials and computer stations, an expanded elementary level collection and increased programming for children. A Homework Center and greatly expanded Teen Collection will also be included.

As the Slavic community comprises 30% of the local elementary school, attention has to be given to expanding the Russian Language Collection and other library resources, such as ESL and audio visual collections.

### ***Responding to the Digital Divide:***

Technology is an essential part of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and often it is the library that provides the only internet access for residents of many rural and isolated areas. "...library computers reach the disadvantaged groups originally identified as lacking access and skills." (*Toward Equality of Access*)

Internet access will be an important service provided by the North Fork Community Library. Children, as well as adults, will enjoy complete access to the Internet, helping to bridge the 'digital divide'.