Whatcom Hospital Bet Quick Sheet

Single-Hospital, No-District Expansion Control Case — PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center

Current version — Oct 31, 2026
Update history:
whatcom-county-hospital-construction-design-demand

The Executive Control Case: Whatcom County has exactly one hospital, and it belongs to no one local. PeaceHealth St. Joseph sits outside every public hospital district, in a county where most land is in no district. The largest expansion in county history ($336M CON, $401M all-in) is financed entirely from reserves and philanthropy — no public bonds, no ballot measures, and no secondary acute facility within 64 miles.

1. FACILITY PROFILE & REGIONAL DEPENDENCY MAP

FACILITY & LICENSE
St. Joseph
WA State Lic. 145 (Est. 1891). Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. Bellingham, WA.

LICENSED VS ACUTE BEDS
255 / 207
255 licensed beds; acute capacity fixed at 207 beds for >20 yrs as population passed 230k.

CLINICAL ACCREDITATIONS
Level II Trauma
County's sole Level II trauma, Level II NICU, open-heart surgery, Leapfrog A, CMS 4-star.

Domain	Metric / Threshold	Operational Impact & Planning Significance
Regional Sole Provider	100% Whatcom, 100% San Juan, 13% Skagit, 27% N. Skagit	Sole acute care hospital for county (>230,000 residents); primary tertiary center for San Juan Islands; catches north Skagit overflow.
FY2025 Patient Volumes	72,223 ED Visits • 15,944 Inpatient Discharges • 9,967 Surgeries • 1,886 Births	3,618 system caregivers supporting dense multi-county catchment; single ED entrance handles international border, islands, and county.
Occupancy Pressure	Target: 70% Midnight Occupancy Actual: 10–18 pts above target	State CON filing documents midnight census consistently at 80%–88% since 2017–18; midday peaks push higher. No local acute relief valve.
Diversion Reality	Providence Everett: 64 miles / 71 minutes away	Next tertiary Level II hospital is over an hour south in normal traffic; filing records Everett also running full with diversions pushed to Seattle.

2. CAPITAL STACK: PHILANTHROPY & RESERVES VS NO BALLOT

STATE CON CAPITAL BUDGET
$336,323,637
Approved by WA DOH in March 2025 for 80 acute beds. 100% funded from cash reserves and gifts. Zero public bond debt.

ALL-IN PROJECT PROGRAM
~$401 Million
Includes $64.8M in excluded infrastructure: 600-stall garage (June 2024), central utility plant, and ED renovation.

Stack Component	Allocation / Source	Governance & Financial Terms
Approved CON Work	$336,323,637	WA DOH Certificate issued March 2025; authorizes 80-bed acute expansion.
Excluded Works	$64,800,000	600-stall parking structure, central utility plant (CUP), emergency department phased renovation.
Philanthropic Gifts	$74,000,000 to project	Anchored by $50M gift from developer Peter Paulsen (d. 2024) within broader $103M campaign.
Health System Reserves	~$327,000,000 balance	PeaceHealth internal capital allocations; no municipal debt or taxpayer assessment.
Tax Levy / District Bonds	$0.00 (Zero)	No public hospital district taxing authority covers the facility; zero voter referendum.

Capital Structure Takeaway: Unlike district-backed hospitals across Washington that rely on voter-approved property tax levies and general obligation bonds, St. Joseph's single-tower expansion is bound strictly to philanthropic timing and operating margins.

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Phasing Schedule, Technical Specifications & District Geography

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3. PETER PAULSEN PAVILION: ARCHITECTURE & TECHNICAL PROGRAM

BUILDING ENVELOPE

6 Stories / 120k SF

Savely Healthcare Architects design; Turner Construction GC; 80 all-private beds (takes hospital to 320 beds).

FOUNDATION ENGINEERING

80-Foot Piles

Deep drilled cast-in-place pilings into Squalicum hillside; 5-day week shift during noisy drilling.

AVIATION MODEL

Dual Helipads

New rooftop helipad for Airlift Northwest vertical drop; existing ground pad retained for Coast Guard.

Milestone / Phase	Date / Period	Operational Scope & Site Status
Central Garage Opening	June 2024	600+ stall garage opened (Abbott Construction); free parking; 90% local subcontractors, $16M local spend.
Land Use & CON Approvals	Jan 2025 / Mar 2025	Planned-development permit issued Jan 2025; State Certificate of Need issued Mar 2025.
Traffic & Entrance Pivot	July 2025	West entrance closed permanently; East Tower re-routed as official front door; 33 ED stalls closed for stormwater.
Demolition & Cooling Tower	August 2026	Old front entrance demolished; new rooftop central utility cooling tower rigged and positioned.
Substructure & Pilings	September 2026	Mass excavation and 80-foot drilled pile installation began on Squalicum hillside. Turner 5-day week.
Acute Bed Licensing	June 2027	73 tower beds licensed: obstetrics, postpartum, pediatrics, cardiac, and medical-surgical floors.
Public Opening & ED Online	2028	Pavilion open to public; consolidated emergency department online; phased ED renovation follows.

4. LIVE LEVEL II TRAUMA SITE MITIGATION PROTOCOL

EGRESS & PARKING REROUTES

- **Parking Loss:** 33 ED stalls closed May 2026 for stormwater; 18 additional stalls closed July 2026.
- **Transit & Valet:** Courtesy shuttle operates weekday hours to East Tower; valet activated July 2026.
- **Life Safety Egress:** Temporary emergency egress route striped directly across the cafeteria floor.

ACOUSTICS & AGENCY REVIEW

- **Acoustic Controls:** Earplugs, earmuffs, and white-noise machines issued to patient rooms & visitors.
- **CRS File:** Construction Review Services review file open since Feb 2023 with WA Dept of Health.
- **Jurisdictions:** Hiring criteria demand demonstrated compliance with WA DOH, CMS, and DNV standards.

5. DISTRICT GEOGRAPHY & DECENTRALIZED COUNTERWEIGHTS

Geography / Entity	District / Tax Structure	Current Status & Operational Dynamic
Bellingham / St. Joseph	No Hospital District	Unincorporated taxing absence; new district requires petition of 10% of registered voters; <35% of WA residents know if they live in a PHD.
Point Roberts Exclave	Point Roberts PHD (Est. 2005)	28¢/$1,000 levy raises ~$300k/yr (94% of budget); funds clinic in fire station (SuperTrack Urgent Care). Clinic costs ~$500k vs ~$200k patient rev; monthly subsidy raised from $16k to $36k (Aug 2025).
East Whatcom (Foothills)	Skagit County PHD 304 sliver	28 registered Whatcom voters; Aug 2026 ballot cast 7 votes (3 for, 4 against); levy lift failed across both counties (45.42% to 54.58%). WA's 1st Rural Health Equity Zone (15,135 residents / 649 sq mi).
Outpatient / ASC Decanting	Non-District / System & Independent	Hospital 8 ORs ran at 118% in 2021; 2 added in 2023; $12.5M 6-OR ASC opened on Squalicum; Mt. Baker endoscopy consolidated July 2026; Proliance ASC opened Feb 2025.
Behavioral Safety Net	Public, County & Tribal	Anne Deacon Center for Hope: 32 crisis beds (16 mental health Compass + 16 withdrawal Pioneer); 23-hr CRC paused; Lummi Nation 16-bed secure withdrawal opened Aug 2024 ($37.6M funding).