



# Lakewood Pierce County Library building condition

## MYTHS AND FACTS

UPDATED JUNE 2023

Thank you for being a valued Lakewood Pierce County Library customer, the Pierce County Library System would like to give you an update on the Lakewood Library.

The Pierce County Library System closed the Lakewood Library on June 5, 2022, because the building, owned by the Pierce County Library, is aging and in critical condition.

The decision to close the Lakewood Library was difficult. The Library System weighed balancing safe, quality service for you and for staff with responsibly managing taxpayers' investment in the Library System.

The roof of the Library needs a complete rebuild and that would require the Library to close for several months and to remove all books and materials, furniture and computers. Moving to an interim site will provide a continuity of services. Through the years, the Library System has taken many steps to repair and maintain the aging, well-loved and well-used building. It has actively maintained and repaired any issues that the Library System has noticed.

Now, the roof, plumbing, sewage and all building systems are approaching the end of their lifecycles and are coming due for replacement. The Library System and the City of Lakewood are convening an advisory committee to review the building and while it is meeting, the Library System does not plan to invest further in the needed maintenance and repairs. The Library System will await a recommendation from the community advisory committee and a decision by the Library's Board of Trustees before investing further.

Following are the Library System's responses to some of the myths its heard about the building and closure. The Library wants to clarify and correct any misinformation.

**Myth:** The Library System is tearing down this building to build apartments.

**Fact: The Library System is not tearing down the building and the Library System can only build libraries, not apartments. Ultimately, the community advisory committee may recommend building another library in another location. If the Board of Trustees approves such a recommendation, the Library System would likely sell the existing property. However, to be very clear: the Library System is not tearing down the building to build apartments.**

**Myth:** The roof was replaced 5 years ago.

**Fact: With the major expansion to the library in 1974, builders installed a new roof. Again, in 1996, an independent study concluded the roof was failing, and the Library System installed a new roof. Since that time, the Library System repaired the roof several times, as the roof construction had numerous structural problems. Most recently, the Library System repaired the roof in 2009, with an understanding that it would be in good condition until 2029. As the poorly constructed roof now requires an entire rebuild—not replacement or repair—a full rebuilding, the 2009 repairs could not be sustained. No other library, in the 19 Pierce County Library buildings, has had as many roof problems as the Lakewood Library's roof.**

**Myth:** The price for rebuilding the roof is bloated. Sounds like someone is getting their pockets lined.

**Fact: The roof is not a replacement, it needs to be entirely removed and reconstructed.**

**Myth:** You're going to ask us to foot the bill for a new building when this building is just fine. Sounds like someone has personally selected a site and will make up anything to get us to move there.

**Fact:** The community advisory committee will make a recommendation to the Library's Board of Trustees. Ultimately, the Library's Board of Trustees will decide how to provide the best library services for Lakewood, based upon input from the committee. If the Board decides to build a new library, how it will be funded will be another decision point. If it involves funding from the public, the Library will engage further with the community to learn their interest in funding the building.

The Lakewood Library building is in critical condition. Recently architects conducted a Building Condition Assessment of the Lakewood Library and estimated the building requires \$10 million-\$15 million in repairs for improved safety and access, including replacing the roof and damage throughout the building from the leaky roof, replacing the elevator, heating and cooling system and plumbing system, and upgrading windows and doors. This estimate includes both urgent needs and long-term investments.

An appraisal of the building estimates the current building and property is valued at \$1.5 million.

**Myth:** The library squandered maintenance money instead of using it to repair things along the way.

**Fact:** The Library System has actively maintained and repaired any issues that it noticed at the Lakewood building, including:

- Repairing roof and building envelope leaks.
- Upgrades to public and staff furniture.
- Fixing plumbing issues including replacing the hot water heater.
- Improving landscaping.
- Maintaining fire protection system.
- Repairing elevator.
- Repairing sewage system.
- Repairing heating and cooling system.

**Myth:** Why can't you just use the money from the levy to repair the roof?

**Fact:** Money from levies fund operating libraries. This is similar to school levy monies. Money from bonds fund capital building and improvements for

governments such as libraries and schools. The Library System does spend levy money for maintenance and repairs of all library buildings. The Lakewood Library repair and maintenance costs exceed typical upkeep. The costs for repairs and replacements outweigh the value of the Lakewood Library. At this time, the Library System does not plan to invest further in the current building and determined further investments are cost prohibitive. The Library System will await a recommendation from a community advisory committee and a decision by the Board of Trustees before investing further.

**Myth:** The advisory committee already has a predetermined outcome in mind.

**Fact:** The committee is meeting this summer and fall and expects to make a recommendation to the Library's Board of Trustees and the City of Lakewood in fall 2022.

**Myth:** The library plans to abandon The Big One.

**Fact:** The Library System has been steadfast in its commitment that any changes or moves with the Lakewood Library include preserving the massive, historic Douglas fir slice from the original Tenzler Library.

**Myth:** It will take months to have a new branch ready. What do you plan to do in the meantime?

**Fact:** Until the interim Lakewood location opens, the Library System encourages you to visit nearby:

DuPont Pierce County Library  
at 1540 Wilmington Drive

Steilacoom Pierce County Library  
at 2950 Steilacoom Blvd.

Tillicum Pierce County Library  
at 14916 Washington Ave. S.W.

University Place Pierce County Library  
at 3609 Market Place W., Suite 100

Enjoy pop-up libraries and other services with community partners throughout Lakewood. People can check out books, movies and other materials as well as enjoy classes and events at the pop-up libraries and community places.

Watch the Library's website for more details:  
[mypcls.org](http://mypcls.org)