

Improving the Accessibility of Elections for Voters with Disabilities

AUGUST 2020



Snohomish County Elections
A Division of the Auditor's Office

Introduction

“Improving the Accessibility of Elections for Voters with Disabilities” is a plan developed by Snohomish County Elections with feedback from its local Accessible Voting Advisory Committee. This plan is evaluated and updated annually to ensure that the County provides accessible service to voters with disabilities within given statutory authority and budgetary constraints and maintains compliance with local, state and federal legal requirements.

The plan is divided into two sections. The first section details accessible voting processes through Accessible Voting Sites and Ballot Drop Boxes. The second section outlines the outreach strategies and efforts to ensure that the citizens with disabilities in our community are aware of the services that are provided by Snohomish County Elections.

Accessible Voting Processes

Snohomish County Elections maintains a number of services that ensure voting can be an independent, private, secure process for all voters. These services include Accessible Voting Sites and 24-hour Ballot Drop Boxes.

Accessible Voting Sites

An Accessible Voting Site is equipped with accessible voting units (AVU) that allow voters with a wide range of physical abilities to cast an independent, private, and secure ballot.

AVUs are touch-screen computers that have enhanced visual features, response controls, and audio capabilities. These features can help people with a wide range of disability such as reduced motor control or low or no vision mark their own ballot. The equipment provides the user the opportunity to review their selections before casting their ballot both through a verifiable paper ballot and an audio review process.

In 2018, Snohomish County Elections implemented a new AVU system called ClearAccess. The AVUs are designed based on the Anywhere ballot developed by the Center for Civic Design. These systems allow users to mark their ballot independently using their own preferred USB compatible devices.

In 2020, Snohomish County Elections will operate three accessible voting sites for all countywide elections. For non-countywide elections, there will be at least one accessible voting location.

The locations and hours of operation for the Nov 3 General Election are:

Location	Dates and Hours of Operation
Alderwood Water and Wastewater District 3626 156th St SW Lynnwood, WA 98087	Saturday, Oct. 31 – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Nov. 2 – 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 3 – 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Snohomish County Campus Robert J. Drewel Building, Public Meeting Room 3000 Rockefeller Ave Everett, WA 98201	
Wyndham Garden Hotel 16710 Smokey Point Blvd Arlington, WA 98223	
Snohomish County Auditor's Office 1 st Floor Admin W 3000 Rockefeller Ave Everett, WA 98201	Starting Monday, Oct. 26 Monday through Friday – 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The number of sites, site locations, and days and hours of operation were determined and influenced by several factors including access and convenience for voters with disabilities, historical use of AVUs, and the County's current financial condition.

Snohomish County Elections ensures that equipment is delivered to the site and is fully operational during the designated hours. Snohomish County Elections hires, trains, and supervises the accessible voting site staff.

24-Hour Ballot Drop Boxes

Snohomish County Elections operates thirty (30) 24-hour ballot drop boxes. Voters can return their ballot directly to a drop box without postage at any time starting 20 days prior to an election through 8pm on Election Day.

Initial sites were identified and chosen after analyzing past ballot return rates through previously staffed community collection centers. In 2017, new legislation required additional drop boxes be added to ensure a drop box in every city, town and census-designated place with a post office. See map on page 7 for plotted locations of the 24-hour drop boxes.

Additional factors considered in the selection of the sites were:

1. Proximity to population centers, ballot drop-off users, and major traffic corridors;
2. Familiarity of locations for majority of the population;
3. Access to public transportation routes;
4. Accessibility features of the sites for voters with disabilities;
5. Availability of parking;
6. Ability to maintain consistent locations for all countywide elections;
7. Ability to partner with a public organization with stable community ties;
8. Desire to serve voters from all five council districts; and
9. Administrative efficiency in supporting and operating the sites.

Based on these factors, it was determined that utilizing several existing Sno-Isle Library branches to serve as locations for the drop boxes would best meet the selection factors and provide the best service to voters. Branches are located near major population centers and are a familiar location to county residents. Libraries are situated close to public transportation routes and are designed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Libraries are an enduring public facility that are not subject to going out of business and are available year round. The sites result in low operation costs as we do not pay a fee for the use of the facilities.

In addition to our partnership with Sno-Isle Libraries, Snohomish County Elections has worked with local cities and private businesses (Bothell, Gold Bar, Lake Stevens, Lynnwood, Marysville, and Darrington) to identify locations that will best meet local community needs.

In addition to the publicly accessible ballot drop boxes below, Snohomish County Elections maintains a ballot drop box in the County jail.

Location of ballot drop boxes	County Council District
Arlington near the Sno-Isle Library 135 N Washington Ave Arlington, WA 98223	#1
Bothell in the QFC parking lot 22833 Bothell Everett Hwy Bothell, WA 98201	#4
Brier (near City Hall) 2901 228 th St SW Brier, WA 98036	#4
Darrington (near library/city hall) 1005 Cascade St Darrington, WA 98241	#1
Edmonds near the Sno-Isle Library 650 Main St Edmonds, WA 98020	#3
Everett at the Snohomish County Campus Rockefeller Ave and Wall Street Everett, WA 98201	#2
Everett at the Everett Mall near Sears 1402 SE Everett Mall Way Everett, WA 98208	#2
Everett (Everett Community College behind the WSU building) 1001 N Broadway Ave Everett, WA 98201	#2
Everett at McCollum Park (drive up) 600 128 th St SE Everett, WA 98208	#4
Gold Bar at Gateway Park 5 th and Orchard Gold Bar, WA 98252	#5

Location of ballot drop boxes (continued)	County Council District
Granite Falls at the Library 815 E Galena St Granite Falls, WA 98252	#1
Index near Town Hall 511 Ave A Index, WA 98256	#5
Lake Stevens near the boat launch (drive up) 1800 Main St Lake Stevens, WA 98258	#5
Lakewood at the parking lot east of the middle school 16800 16 th Dr ne Marysville, WA 98271	#1
Lynnwood at the Ash Way Park and Ride 16327 Ash Way Lynnwood, WA 98087	#3
Lynnwood in front of City Hall (drive up) 19100 44 th Ave W Lynnwood, WA 98036	#3
Marysville behind City Hall (drive up) 1049 State Ave Marysville, WA 98270	#1
Mill Creek (in turnaround near post office) 159 th Pl SE and Mill Creek Blvd Mill Creek, WA 98223	#4
Monroe near the Sno-Isle Library 1070 Village Way Monroe, WA 98272	#5
Mountlake Terrace near the Library 23300 58 th Ave W Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043	#4
Mukilteo near the Sno-Isle Library 4675 Harbour Pointe Blvd Mukilteo, WA 98275	#2
Silvana near Peace Lutheran Church 1717 Ole Larson Rd Silvana, WA 98287	#1

Location of ballot drop boxes (continued)	County Council District
Smokey Point (near Lowe's) 3300 169 th PI NE Arlington, WA 98223	#1
Snohomish near the Sno-Isle Library 311 Maple Ave Snohomish, WA 98290	#5
Stanwood in additional Sno-Isle Library parking area (drive up) 9701 271 st St NW Stanwood, WA 98292	#1
Startup near Event Center 14315 366 th Ave SE Sultan, WA 98294	#5
Sultan near City Hall/Library 319 Main St Sultan, WA 98294	#5
Tulalip near the youth center 6722 Totem Beach Rd Tulalip, WA 98271	#2
Woodway near Town Hall 23920 113 th PI W Woodway, WA 98020	#3

Ballot Drop Box Locations

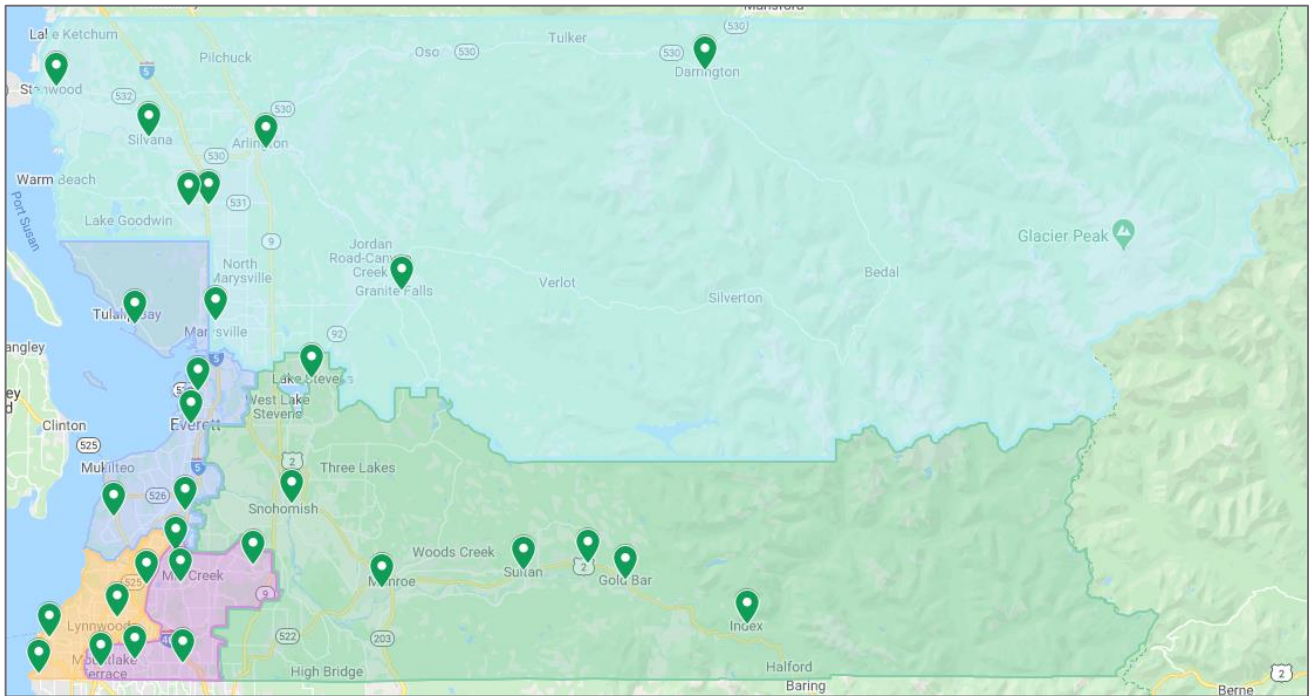


Figure 1: Ballot drop box locations (<https://snohomishcountywa.gov/225/Ballot-Drop-Box-Locations>)

Snohomish County Elections has developed a Google map layer for the ballot drop locations that is available through the county website. Website visitors can use the navigation/directions tools built into Google Maps to find directions to each location.

Outreach to Voters with Disabilities

To ensure that information on voting services is available to voters with disabilities and that those services meet voters' needs, Snohomish County Elections is committed to a number of outreach activities.

Information Available through the County Website

Snohomish County Elections will maintain accessible voting information on its website including the availability of accessible voting equipment, online markable ballots, and ballot drop box locations. In addition, a link will be provided to Disability Rights Washington's Voting Assistance Guide (<https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/assisting-voters-disabilities/>).

Accessible Voting Advisory Committee Meetings

Snohomish County conducts annual meetings of its Accessible Voting Advisory Committee. These meetings focus on reviewing the plan for accessible voting services and strategizing outreach activities. These meetings also provide an opportunity to capture feedback and lessons learned from the previous elections.

Press Releases

Snohomish County Elections prepares press releases for each election that include information on accessible registration and voting processes. Our releases are sent to regional and local media and community groups. Anyone interested in receiving our press releases can be added to the list.

Local Voters' Pamphlet and Ballot Inserts

Snohomish County advertises the services provided and the availability of the Accessible Voting Sites along with the 24-Hour Ballot Drop Boxes in the local voters' pamphlet and election ballot inserts. Each household is provided a copy of the local voters' pamphlet in the Primary and General Elections. Every voter receives a ballot insert with information on the site locations and hours.

Community Events

Snohomish County Elections is available to support election information sharing and voter education through local community events. We can attend community events to demonstrate the accessible voting equipment, share voter registration and election information, and generally support existing voter education efforts in the community.

To request Snohomish County Elections support at your community event, contact Duncan Clauson at [425-388-3694](tel:425-388-3694) or Duncan.Clauson@snoco.org.