

Bellingham's Waterfront District

Architects' Evaluation Team Report

March 4, 2009



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II. Introduction

As a community, we have an incredible opportunity to develop a site as large and unique as the Waterfront District. It is our collective responsibility to develop it with parameters that will maximize all of its natural qualities. Great care and many hours have been spent on making this an exciting and beautiful addition to our city, with input coming from experts and concerned citizens.

The site will be a regional focal point and a captivating place for residents and visitors alike. It can enhance Bellingham by creating view corridors and connectivity to the bay, maximizing infill, harnessing alternative energy, and providing recreation and social opportunities; all while being respectful to the land, our history and future generations. Bellingham has the potential to be a leader in the Northwest and the nation by using our collective foresight, imagination and inspiration to create a framework for future sustainable development that preserves and enhances its natural qualities.

The Port and the City of Bellingham, along with many committed staff, private citizens and volunteers have been working diligently and cooperatively since 2004 to create an overall plan that incorporates the myriad of issues, community visions, consultant studies and staff work. In late 2008 some substantive differences between the City's and Port's direction began to emerge. Informal discussions among several local architects led to the idea that our collective experience and knowledge of planning, design, and development processes might offer a new perspective on the issues. After confirming with Port and City staff that our opinions would be welcomed, we began a process of information gathering and discussion.

Our evaluation process took place from December 2008 through February 2009. We met with leaders and staff from the Port, the City, WTA and WWU. We also gathered information from existing reports and studies. From the start, we agreed that our mission would be to address only the issues that remained unresolved between the two parties. These were enumerated by the City in the "Red/Green" document dated October 28, 2008, which can be found at:

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www.cob.org/documents/planning/newwhatcom/2008-10-28-comparison-city-port-plans.pdf.

To guide us, we reviewed the various existing studies from the 1992 R/UDAT to the current "Bellingham Connections" and "Waterfront District; The Proposal." We referred frequently to the "Guiding Principles and Implementation Strategies" as approved by the Waterfront Advisory Group in 2006 and applied the principles contained in the US Green Building Council's LEED for Neighborhoods rating system.

Our intent was not to create yet another plan, or to reopen topics on which there already was general agreement. The intent of our recommendations was to improve and unify the master plan concepts, to provide a professional and impartial opinion, and to help achieve consensus among the parties. During the process of our study we have already seen resolution and agreement reached on many important issues. Still, we realize that there are many decisions to be made, even after accord is reached on the major issues. We are optimistic that this report will enable the final pieces of a master plan to reach a successful conclusion.

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III. Topics

1. Street Grid & Connectivity

“ ...Extend the CBD grid as far as a rotated Commercial Street...”

Achieving a sense of connectivity with downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods is a critical goal for the waterfront. Connectivity is defined not only by roadway links, but by pedestrian paths, multimodal links, and especially by visual connections.

Points of vehicular connection between downtown and the waterfront should be as simple and direct as possible, while considering the challenges of the railroad crossing and the grade alignment. The first step has been achieved with the newly-proposed design for a straight Cornwall Street. The existing connections at Central and Wharf will also be important during the early phases of development. It is important to realize that these two points of connection will be the only access to the site while the new Cornwall bridge is being constructed.

Vehicular access at Central is already in place with the current at-grade railroad crossing. **Maintaining vehicular access on the north side of the Granary Building will allow it to be preserved while reuse possibilities are explored.** In future phases of development a pedestrian walkway should be provided immediately adjacent to the water (a hard urban edge or wharf) at this location.

Wharf Street can be maintained in its existing configuration at first, but when development generates appropriate traffic it should eventually be converted to the proposed “fly over” design that will eliminate the at-grade railroad crossing. Bay and Commercial Streets can also be connected in later phases of development. They should first be developed as pedestrian paths, with the expectation that they will be converted to combined pedestrian/vehicular routes if and when development density and traffic impacts warrant. As discussed later in this document, it is recommended that a plaza, rather than separate bridges, be built over the railroad tracks between Bay Street and Cornwall Street.

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The orientation of the existing downtown street grid should be extended across the railroad tracks into the new waterfront district. Where vehicular connections occur, the new streets should connect to the existing city streets with straight or 90-degree intersections (although costs and engineering regarding the spans must also be considered). After crossing the railroad tracks, Commercial St. should be widened to a "Park Street", and rotate due west at a location that allows preservation of key salvageable existing pulp mill structures. **The existing downtown grid orientation, between Central and Commercial Streets, should extend southwest until it intersects the rotated Commercial St.** Streets that would intersect at 45 degrees should be rotated just prior to meeting to allow for 90 degree intersections. This layout will allow for two or three boulevards or "Park Streets" in the east-west orientation & reflects some of the best aspects of both master plans.

It is somewhat problematic for long term growth that there are no available connections from existing neighborhoods to the waterfront between Cornwall and Wharf. While it is unfortunate that the grade changes and railroad location prohibit making a vehicular connection at Laurel Street, we strongly encourage making a pedestrian and bike connection there. **It is also essential that the Waterfront District be connected to the marina, terraquarium and other development across the Whatcom Waterway with an iconic pedestrian bridge as public input has consistently recommended.** An uninterrupted pedestrian pathway should then continue on to the Marine Trade Center and the Terraquarium site. As the street connections are designed and engineered in more detail, every possible additional opportunity for pedestrian/bike connectivity should be explored.

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2. SUSTAINABILITY

"...more than just LEED points..."

We have an incredible opportunity to create a showcase for sustainable development at the Waterfront that will maintain and enhance Bellingham's position as a national leader in sustainability. Not only will it demonstrate how to build a new sustainable neighborhood, but also how to turn a toxic industrial brownfield into a new healthy place for humans and other species.

Studies have already taken place to explore Low Impact Design strategies and we encourage the Port and City to continue exploring these options. The Park Street concept will help facilitate this. We also recommend that the Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks of the USGBC's newly developed Sustainable Sites Initiative be incorporated as the process moves forward. The development should strive to meet the LEED for Neighborhood goals, at the same time we should also remember that sustainability is more than just racking up LEED points. We encourage the continued use of the Triple Bottom Line strategy that will equally weigh financial, ecological and human impacts.

3. Parks and Park Streets

"...this infrastructure has multiple benefits & can be exciting..."

A variety of open spaces should be created throughout the neighborhood. Per LEED for Neighborhood Development NDP Credit 12 these should be of certain minimum sizes, and within a 1/6 mile (880 lf) walk of 90% of the dwelling and business entrances within the district. Both the City and Port's proposed master plans nicely address this issue along the shoreline portion of the District by providing generous green or open park spaces. However, the inland portions of the District do not fall within the recommended distances and may be viewed as less desirable development opportunities.

The Port's Waterfront District Proposal (section 6.2) addresses various types of pedestrian street configurations. Type 4 "Green Streets" or Type 5 "Park Streets" are landscaped, green open spaces integrated parallel with the proposed street

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network . Two or three of these should be created to connect the shoreline to the inland portion of the District. With these green components, the more remote portions of the District will become more valuable for development and will reinforce the view corridors and connections to the waterfront.

Benefits of Green Streets include:

- Broad view corridors
- Better solar energy access
- Pedestrian paths
- Public recreation opportunities
- Passive storm water strategies
- Increased inland property values

The uniform depth of the currently planned shoreline open spaces should be modulated to provide greater experiential diversity. More diversity of park width and scale at the water's edge will allow the addition of new open spaces to create these view-oriented open spaces, within the same 33 acreage commitment to parks. The southern portion of the District would easily support this plan component.

4. Integrating the Railroad

"...do not let the Railroad Tracks obstruct connectivity..."

Progress has already been made in working with Burlington-Northern to relocate the tracks to the edge of the neighborhood. The next important step is to provide a covered crossing or plaza over the railroad between Bay Street and Cornwall Avenue. **We believe it is extremely important that a strong position be taken to negotiate this solution. It is a critical link between downtown and the new waterfront neighborhood.** Intermittent openings to the tracks for ventilation will be necessary, but rather than separate bridges over a chasm-like railroad track, the plaza concept will accomplish many of the community goals expressed in both the Port's and City's concepts for the new Waterfront District.

The plaza will connect the existing Downtown/CBD street grid to the waterfront in a manner easily understood and negotiated by vehicles, bicycles and

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pedestrians. A plaza with both street/right-of-way crossings and open green space above the railroad will allow a gracious and generous overlook from the Downtown and could also connect to a possible future City Public Library site. It will allow for more transportation connections to the lower elevation of the District in the future, if not all of the rights-of-way are extended initially. LEED for Neighborhood Development NPD Credit 11 supports this concept because it promotes multipoint, through-street connections at neighborhood project boundaries.

A covered connection enables consistent view corridors to be maintained across a steep "moat like" grade change to the lower District. The District side of the structure provides a convenient "back wall" for future development within the district, and allows for screened parking areas within future structures.

A covered connection would reduce the acoustical impact of trains at the downtowns' primary connection point to the new District. It would provide value by increasing the tax revenues and potential sites for development on the Downtown side of the structure. The Public Agencies should negotiate aggressively with Burlington Northern Railroad. This is a key issue for connectivity.

5. Pedestrian Paths

"...maintain strong connections along ALL of the waterfront..."

The current City and Port master plans strongly connect the non-motorized trail system through the District along the shoreline. However, at the current Shipping Terminal portion of the District, the connection is not as strongly defined or promoted. A minimum 20- to 30-foot wide pedestrian connection between the Log Pond and Cornwall Cove areas is encouraged, while honoring the need for secure and safe shipping operations.

6. Western Washington University

"...the location is key to entire waterfront..."

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Because the University will be one of the most significant initial participants in the first phase of the waterfront development and because its needs are unique and critical to the success of both, we believe that WWU's program must receive primary consideration.

In our meetings with WWU administration, several priorities were presented; specifically, that the University:

1. will require an area of 6 – 8 acres now, with the possibility of 4 – 8 more acres in the future;
2. contemplates building up to 300,000 square feet with a contiguous core creating a sense of place;
3. Future expansion creating a blended edge;
4. wants a waterfront exposure;
5. is concerned about railroad noise & program compatibility;
6. requires easy access to and from the main campus;
7. has concerns about the feasibility of adaptive re-use of existing structures;
8. has a strong programmatic need to be located a short distance from the NOAA site;
9. requires that the parcel be intact (except perhaps the future expansion area) with no roads through it; and
10. the campus may expand away from the waterfront into the surrounding commercial development.

Primarily because of items seven and eight, the waterfront campus site must be determined before other development considerations and pedestrian, bike, auto and transit hubs should be adjusted to meet WWU's needs as well as the future development of the remaining site.

- Three additional considerations – the parcel size, the requirement that State funded university buildings must be LEED "Silver" or better, and the likelihood of pedestrian friendly development – argue for locating the parcel as close to the CBD as practical to enhance connectivity, provide waterfront access and spin-off private development.

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Considering the above parameters and the proposed location of the Library, two locations are recommended: either along the Whatcom Creek Waterway between Bay Street and Central Avenue and/or further west along the Waterway, generally bounded by Maple & Laurel Streets, and we understand that the University strongly prefers the later.

7. Water's Edge

"...provide a mix of waterfront experiences..."

A varied urban water's edge encourages a diversity of uses along the waterfront and should be designed to compliment and celebrate the restored natural environment as well as commercial activity. The plan should consider day and night time activities as well as places designed specifically for a variety of uses and users are important. Successful naturally landscaped or "passive" park areas work best when they are complimented by areas where more activities are available. Green space alone should not serve as the only use; this could put a damper on the inherent vibrancy of the waterfront. Focusing on destinations, as well as open space or parks, enables a genuine community-led process to take root. Ideally, each destination should provide numerous things to do, which creates diverse, layered activity, ensuring that no single use will predominate.

In addition to the pedestrian bridge over the waterway mentioned above, an urban wharf should be provided adjacent to the water's edge along the westerly edge of Whatcom Creek Waterway, connecting the Marine Heritage Park and the proposed WWU campus location. Because the most important biological functions occur in this intertidal zone, the master plan should have the flexibility to include a range of large community parks as well as more intimate public places. The urban edge of the waterfront should be designed to compliment and celebrate the restored natural environment.

Buildings adjacent to this promenade should allow for vistas to/from upland areas. The height of buildings next to the pedestrian concourse should be scaled appropriately. A variety of building street edges both vertically and horizontally

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is desirable, with distances of 20 to 50 feet horizontally from the face of a building to the outer edge of the pedestrian walkway.

8. Existing Structures

"... allow for future preservation of key structures..."

Preservation and reuse of existing structures is a desirable development option for LEED-ND, the WFG Principles and the local Historic Preservation Commission. Therefore several structures that date from the operations of the Puget Sound Pulp & Timber Company should be preserved in order to allow for future exploration of adaptive reuse opportunities.

LEED-ND addresses the rehabilitation of historic buildings by:

- Recognizing historic preservation laws and core concepts by using terminology established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
- Allowing the exemption of historic districts if the historic design does not follow the guidelines outlined in Neighborhood Pattern & Design: Prerequisite 1-Walkable Streets
- Prohibiting the demolition of part or all of any Federal-, State-, or locally-listed historic building unless the demolition has been approved by the local historic preservation review board, or similarly empowered entity.

The feasibility of reusing existing structures will ultimately be determined by the design and development community in the months and years to come. In order that as many as possible are preserved for evaluation by potential developers in the future, we recommend that a street layout be configured that allows for retention of key structures. This recommendation does not necessarily affect orientation of the street grid, only the location of streets.

Additional analysis should determine the level of reuse potential for each structure based on structural integrity, necessary seismic upgrades, building footprint sizes, economic considerations, view corridors, potential sea level rise

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impacts and grade. The Port and City should jointly commission an implementation study of these remaining structures, involving a developer, to assess the economic feasibility of building preservation and reuse.

This group has identified a core group of structures that we feel have relatively high reuse potential. These structures have all been identified as having "reuse potential" both in the 2004 Existing Building Inventory and the Cultural Resource/Historic Property Assessment as part of the Due Diligence Report referenced in the EIS.

They have been identified in the New Whatcom Redevelopment Project Supplement Draft EIS of October 2008 as:

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- #6 Boiler House and Chimney
- #7 Old Granary/Egg Co-op
- #8 Barking and Chipping Plant
- #12 Board Mill Building
- #49 High Density Tanks

We feel that although the Boiler House (commonly referred to as the Steam Plant) would be particularly difficult to rehabilitate for adaptive reuse, it could have significant historic value considering its unique industrial use and content.

If upon future analysis, it is determined that appropriate and feasible rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse opportunities don't exist, at that time appropriate mitigation measures should be taken including:

- Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation.
- An interpretation plan for the Whatcom Waterway area,
- A building materials salvage and reuse strategy program.

We also encourage preservation of the many unique industrial artifacts and icons, as well as whatever portions of the remaining machinery could be salvaged and used in creative ways. Possibilities include a museum documenting the industrial history of the site, and/or using items in the landscape in an artistic or educational way.

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9. Sea Level Rise

"...do not build a dike or levee around the site..."

The Port and City have acknowledged the projections by the University of Washington for sea level rise in the planning for the waterfront redevelopment and have embraced a sustainable design approach for the associated improvements for the project. They each anticipate filling to accommodate the City roads and Port environmental cap for remediation. South of the Whatcom Waterway the site roadways are anticipated to be elevated approximately 3 to 10 feet. The port and city seem to be in agreement on these methods. Suitable grades for development and earth related impacts will have to be identified as development progresses accommodating the structures, utilities, roads and parking. A sloping grade from the CBD to the District will enhance the views and experience of walking or bicycling to the Bay.

The retention of historic buildings and the methods to accommodate the sea rise will depend on the remaining structures, their functions and design accommodation to make them usable.

The existing and new storm water utility system is basically the same for the City and Port plans: a combination of new and existing improvements with phasing to accommodate the 20-plus years of development for the project. The suggested filling/capping system offers a unprecedented opportunity to use storm water and its flow to the sea, along with the Park Streets and paths, for circulation corridors to enhance the visual experience, reduce the carbon footprint and fulfill the community's stated goals for this new neighborhood.

10. Block Sizes

"...match existing City Blocks..."

New block and alley sizes should be consistent with those in the existing Central Business District. Internal alleys and/or service drives and mid-block pedestrian

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promenades or galleries should be provided through larger building blocks. WAG Strategy 3A advocates for a network of interconnected multimodal facilities within the site. Encourage shorter blocks to provide numerous active intersections and vital opportunities for pedestrians to frequently "turn corners".

LEED-ND Neighborhood Pattern & Design Credit 8 "Street Network" encourages high levels of internal connectivity with higher street grid densities. The "street grid" should not be limited to vehicular streets, but should include pedestrian, bike, and transit-only paths that can interlace the site without negatively impacting available land for development. Intersections need not be full four-way "X" type; T-intersections can provide necessary flexibility and access while calming traffic. "Super Blocks" are strongly discouraged. Where larger units of development are planned, development standards should require multimodal paths at reasonable intervals, consistent with the principals of LEED ND.

11. Solar Access

"...orientation should be mostly East/West, North/South..."

Orienting blocks due East/West is preferred for optimal passive and active solar systems. The East and West faces will receive less direct glare and heat gain in summer. Additionally, narrow buildings provide greater opportunities for daylight and natural ventilation to reach the occupants.

LEED-ND Green Construction & Technology Credit 11 directs that blocks be oriented within 15 degrees of true east-west, and that the east-west dimension of the block be longer than the north-south dimension. While it has been suggested that buildings could be rotated to this position on blocks of other orientations, in reality, developers will always seek to maximize efficiency. A building that is rotated 45 degrees to the street grid is an inefficient use of the site's available square footage. Numerous rotated buildings would result in less lively and more fragmented street facades. Solar access and shadowing should be part of the building height and view analysis. The wide Park Streets will make this easier.

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12. ENCOGEN Site

"...plan now for future relocation..."

The PSE Encogen facility impedes the optimal long range mixed-use development of the southern New Whatcom Waterfront District site. The co-gen plant presents environmental and aesthetic impacts and its location blocks planned street grids and access to Cornwall Avenue from the west for approximately 1,000 ft. The facility has a remaining useful life of 13 years, according to State Utilities and Transportation Commission documents. A ten-year extension to this use would be reasonable with probable decommissioning in year 2032. After the facility has been removed, the planned street grid and utility loops should be extended through the site to link to Cornwall.

13. Regulatory Approvals

"...nobody likes surprises..."

WAG Strategy IV.6. calls for "promoting a Healthy & Dynamic Waterfront Economy by improving permitting processes to achieve the goals and principles of the Waterfront Vision... and to create flexible zoning in the City Center. Additionally, the city should... adopt a master plan for the New Whatcom area, which includes the zoning, development regulations and infrastructure plans for the area."

The number one issue for potential private developers is regulatory predictability and timeliness of approvals. The Waterfront Futures Group and the public comments have been clear about this. The final Master Plan must have an overall EIS that covers the entire parcel, with built-in flexibility for mixed uses and patterns. A developer should only have to obtain a building permit and design review approval similar to any other mixed-use property throughout the city, subject to conditions of this zone. If the project meets conditions of the zoning requirements, there are no public hearings. If a project proposes a design departure, or conditional use, it would go through a public process as regulated in zoning for this area. It is crucial to allow for a timely,

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predictable process. Too many unknowns and delays will slow or deter development and significantly increase costs. This can be accomplished without reducing the City's overall jurisdiction or review process for each project. Lastly, all new regulations should include specific language to meet LEED-ND goals.

14. Environmental Impact Statement

"...no change to impact of existing EIS..."

The total physical impact of the existing, proposed project on site has a maximum environmental impact on the existing and surrounding land area and systems. A revised plan, no matter how different, must be designed to not exceed the proposed impacts, so that a new EIS is not required. Any changes to open space areas or roads must be offset with increased or decreased development densities, etc. The overall economic drivers and impacts must also be similar, or not exceed, impacts proposed.

The exact configuration may be somewhat irrelevant because the connections to existing roads are the same. As an example, if there are more road intersections to meet LEED-ND requirements, their impact can be offset with more green rain gardens via "Park Streets" which also add value to inland properties. Again, modifications can be accomplished without the need for a new EIS because minor modifications do not increase the overall impacts. This policy is similar to the existing Planned Development Agreements in the City today.

15. Design Review

"...use a Design Review Board for flexibility..."

One of the keys to development is an allowance for flexibility within the context of the established zoning regulations for this area. A Design Review Board (DRB), the same or similar to the existing Downtown DRB, or Cordata DRB, should be implemented. This process allows for design departures, if master plan principles are maintained, while meeting the overall project goals. It is

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important that this process be clear and expedient, and that the overall environmental approvals be complete, as mentioned above. Regulatory language cannot be expected to cover all situations and circumstances.

16. Building Heights

"... use Floor Area Ratio zoning, & a variety of heights..."

The FAR or Floor Area Ratio approach uses a mathematical relationship of land area to building floor area for planning a neighborhood or district. It encourages articulation of the horizon and creates controlled infill while ensuring adequate light and air to the whole area. With a FAR system, the planning department and architects have tools to achieve successful commercial and residential development goals while maintaining overall control of building mass which helps achieve the goal of a variety of building sizes.

The neighboring district, Old Town, has recently adopted the FAR approach to determine proper scale for the overall neighborhood; setting development guidelines and height restrictions, as well as allowing flexibility for commercial / retail / residential development to occur. It makes good sense to adopt this same approach for the New Whatcom Waterfront District, ensuring flow from one neighborhood to the next. It makes good sense to adopt this same approach for the New Whatcom.

The heights of structures will be a crucial element to the dynamic space created at the waterfront.. **Allowable building heights should range from 35' to 200' with buildings stepping up in height as they step away from the waters' edge, except as determined through view analysis.**

17. Air Rights

"...a good tool for flexibility of uses..."

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From a planning standpoint, the utilization of air rights can provide additional economic and development opportunity for growth in the community. It will be important to ensure that there will be air rights available over the railroad, easements and right of ways to add continuity and flexibility of development. The use of air rights provides additional developable sites and increases property values in these areas, which then adds tax revenue for the community.

18. Views

"...analyze key view angles from appropriate distances..."

Addressing the issue of views is critical to the success of the development. We must address:

- Scenic views from various locations on the new site
- How various options for development of the site will affect current views from Bellingham's existing parks and neighborhoods, and how best to protect them,
- Creating new views and view corridors from key locations in Bellingham
- What the view of the new development will be from the waterside.

When the City developed the master plan for the Old Town Urban Village in 2008, extensive attention was paid to protecting and creating views. We strongly urge the city to use the same three-dimensional modeling techniques for the Waterfront Neighborhood.

Wide Green Streets or Park Streets open up new and more desirable vistas across the site to the water and Lummi Island. They also create a more dynamic and exciting experience of arrival, as new views open up the closer you get to the site itself.

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19. Bellingham Central Library

"...a good potential bridge from downtown..."

The library is a good candidate for a first phase Waterfront District project. We feel the library should be relocated from its planned existing location to the north end of the Waterfront District and recommend the site south of Chestnut between Bay Street and Commercial. It should be aligned at the east end of a Park Street.

The Library project represents an excellent opportunity for a mixed-use public/private development. A parking structure could be placed beneath the library raising the entry level of the library to existing street level. The parking structure would serve as an acoustical and visual buffer to the railroad right-of-way. A public plaza could span the R.O.W. offering an inviting pedestrian link to both the library and the waterfront. The private interest could share in the cost and use of the parking structure and could build a commercial or residential component over the library. This solution solves the issue of temporarily moving the library during construction, offers an early project in the Waterfront District close to the CBD, provides structured parking and addresses the issue of conflicts with development adjacent to the tracks.

20. Public Transit

"...plan for a transit hub..."

The public transit component consists of two parts, the WWU connector and the general public system. A multi-modal transit hub is essential to the success of the overall development. The hub will encourage community transportation by making it accessible and convenient. It will also help reduce single occupancy vehicle trips coinciding with a reduction in parking requirements. The transit hub will also satisfy important aspects of LEED ND requirements.

The transit hub should be located convenient to the new WWU campus entrance and accommodate a WWU shuttle offering direct and efficient service to the

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main campus and the Lincoln Street park and ride. WTA and WWU should be consulted to fully understand their needs and design criteria. WWU will need to coordinate class schedules to coincide with the transit time between the two sites. WTA has stated the need for a pullout area to store a bus at the hub for periods of time during the day. The transit hub should be planned to coordinate with other modes of transportation including bikes, pedestrians, water taxis and light rail. The multi-modal hub, in addition to the WWU terminus would also be one stop among many in the WTA fixed route and Para transit route system. For their fixed route system, WTA requires specific turning radius and vision distance criteria.

21. Marina

"...need to see water-dependent activities and vistas..."

As a waterfront city, the new marina is seen as an amenity for the Waterfront District as well as the community. It will also generate revenue since berths are at a premium in our area. To enhance the visibility and presence of the marina from the Waterfront District, we recommend reducing the height of the breakwater along the east of the marina to as low as the wave model will allow while still functioning safely as a park. Improved visibility of the marina will enhance the desirability and value of the developable land across the waterway. The removed material can then be used as fill at the new development area.

IV. Masterplan Concept Summary

"...design in some excitement..."

After intense study of all plans to date, we feel all of the recommendations are achievable to reach a true consensus that uses the best ideas of both plans, plus additional ideas that maintain the principles of the original Waterfront Vision from the public.

It should also be mentioned that all of the participants of this study feel that the final Master Plan should achieve a design layout and vision that is exciting for

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the community and that everyone can enthusiastically support. Many ideas may be realized in the distant future, but they should be planned for now. This plan needs to celebrate Bellingham's unique place on the planet. The excitement should come not only in the plan layout, such as the way we connect people to the water's edge, but also in the landmarks they experience along the way. Perhaps it comes from an iconic structure, such as a pedestrian bridge over Whatcom Waterway, a public plaza, or the way the industrial artifacts are retained.

Having said this, we also clearly understand the economic realities of achieving any of this in a reasonable time period, with a reasonable return on investment. Realistic phasing needs to happen, as long as the plan is in place. Incremental development can happen if there is a clear direction.

There are several additional ideas that should be discussed in greater detail that allow for realistic short-term development. This is a vast area of real estate. Early development may include a Higher Education Campus, Civic Uses and ancillary commercial development in close proximity to downtown. Some of the remaining large land parcels could allow for interim uses to create an economic engine on the waterfront, as we live and learn over the next 50 to 100 years. It might make sense to experiment with light industrial activities and/or intense urban agriculture. The waterfront may become a sustainable resource for a 100 mile area, while lowering infrastructure costs. Over time, this area could be transitioned to higher density mixed use, as the economy changes and people come to appreciate a vibrant urban village experience, but the base zoning should accommodate the higher density use. These are some of the many ideas that need to be realistically explored after the master plan is in place.

This has been an all-volunteer effort with hundreds of hours by local Architects who have had experience all over the world with many similar projects. This is our community and we care deeply about its future. We have had great cooperation from the City and Port in the effort to achieve consensus, and we applaud them for allowing this effort to happen.

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We are confident that a revised master plan layout can be achieved that is not so much as a compromise, but achieves true synergy that is greater than the sum of the parts. The revised layout must create a "Wow!", excitement factor, that will create desire for economic development and the community's connection to our waterfront.

Bellingham's Waterfront District

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V. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to everyone at the City, Port, WTA and WWU who took the time to meet with us, including Mike Stoner, Jim Darling, Rick Benner, Buff Shoenfeld, Steve Swan, Rick Nicholson, Tom Rosenberg, Tim Stewart and Mayor Dan Pike. We are thankful and appreciative of all of the work that has been done over the years to get the community to this point. Many, many hours have been invested by public agencies, consultants and private citizens. We feel fortunate to be a part of such a caring and involved community.

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