

CHAPTER TWO

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2.0 Vision

The community vision for Bellingham's central waterfront has been developed over more than two decades of planning and strategic investment. Some of the key vision statements from the WFG's guiding principles for the City Center character and Central Business District Neighborhood Plan are repeated in this Waterfront District Sub-Area Plan to ensure that the plan is consistent with and implements the City's Comprehensive Plan, Central Business District Neighborhood Plan and the WFG vision.



Architectural Concept Images by Stephanie Bower

2.1 Waterfront Futures Group Vision

Guiding Principle 1 – Reinforce the Inherent Qualities of Each Place on the Waterfront:

- 1-1. Make the waterfront a regular part of the lives of more people.
- 1-2. Respect history, cultures, and the arts.
- 1-3. Make the waterfront inviting to people on foot.
- 1-4. Reinforce a unique “sense of place” at different waterfront locations.
- 1-5. Complement adjacent uses.

Guiding Principle 2 – Restore the Health of Land & Water:

- 2-1. Enhance or reintroduce natural systems.
- 2-2. Create and restore habitat wherever possible.
- 2-3. Remediate upland and in-water contamination.
- 2-4. Protect existing natural shorelines.
- 2-5. Seek opportunities to soften existing hardened shorelines.
- 2-6. Tailor environmental cleanup strategies and remediation to planned use.
- 2-7. Manage stormwater to enhance estuarine habitats.
- 2-8. Require sustainable practices in all development.
- 2-9. Restore, enhance and expand beaches wherever possible.
- 2-10. Connect proposed open space and natural areas to regional open space network and natural wildlife corridors.
- 2-11. Explore mitigation banking and incentives (such as environmental credits) for environmental resource protection and enhancement prior to redevelopment.



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Guiding Principle 3 – Improve Waterfront Access:

- 3-1. Develop strong connections between up lands and water.
- 3-2. Provide links to regional trail systems.
- 3-3. Provide multiple modes of access to each area of the waterfront.
- 3-4. Provide convenient connections between different modes of transportation (jitney/bus).
- 3-5. Create and connect large and small parks and open spaces with a “braided” system of pedestrian trails.
- 3-6. Enhance opportunities for visual access to waterfront areas.
- 3-7. Provide the opportunity to walk the waterfront while respecting natural habitat.
- 3-8. Help people find their way.
- 3-9. Provide way finding for the Coast Millennium Trail as a route that follows existing and proposed trails.
- 3-10. Explore the concept of public access “banking” and other financing incentives for improving public access.
- 3-11. Protect and enhance environmental resources when designing shoreline access and upland development.

Guiding Principle 4 – Promote a Healthy and Dynamic Waterfront Economy:

- 4-1. Create new mixed-use areas on the waterfront for commercial, industrial, educational, recreational and residential uses.
- 4-2. Support water dependent activities and uses.
- 4-3. Create conditions attractive to jobs of the future.
- 4-4. Strengthen the tie between local jobs and resources.
- 4-5. Provide public amenities and

infrastructure to support redevelopment.

4-6. Improve permitting processes to achieve the goals and principles of the Waterfront Vision.

4-7. Explore economic spin-off related to Bellingham Bay Pilot cleanup strategies.

4-8. Provide incentives and credits for “green” buildings.

2.2 The Waterfront District



Guiding Principles and Implementation Strategies

The WAG sponsored a public involvement process during 2005 and 2006, which led to the adoption of “New Whatcom Guiding Principles and Implementation Strategies” by the Port and City in 2006. The Implementation Strategies provide further guidance related to redevelopment of the Waterfront District and are listed in the applicable chapters of this Sub-Area Plan.

2.3 City Of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan

The WFG plans, visions, guiding principles and recommendations were used to inform updates to the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, the visions for the six “character areas” along the waterfront and 39 general guiding principles were included in the Framework Goals and Policies chapter of the 2006 City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

2.4 Central Business District Neighborhood Plan

The WFG guiding principles for the City Center character area were summarized and incorporated into the Central Business District Neighborhood Plan to ensure consistency with, and implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan and the WFG's recommendations for Bellingham's waterfront.

- Create a mixed-use neighborhood, with a combination of commercial, institutional, educational, retail services and housing.
- Provide a place where people can live, work, study and spend their leisure time without relying on auto transportation.
- Convert the existing ASB into a new marina or marine habitat.
- Maintain deep water and transient moorage and marine-related commerce in and along the Whatcom Creek Waterway.
- Significantly improve public access opportunities throughout the area.
- Locate WWU and/or other educational or institutional facilities in the area.
- Acquire the GP property to ensure community involvement in planning for redevelopment and to secure acquisition of land for parks, roads and public access.

When implemented, this vision will connect downtown Bellingham with the central waterfront and contribute in a significant way toward the vibrancy of the community and the region.

2.5 Bellingham Shoreline Master Program

The City of Bellingham adopted an update to its Shoreline Master Program (SMP) in 2013.. The SMP goal for shoreline development within the Waterfront District is:

Coordinate shoreline uses to ensure uses that result in long-term over short-term benefit, protect and restore the shoreline resources and ecological

functions, increase public access to the shoreline, and promote economic development and accommodate water-dependent uses.

The proposed shoreline uses, setbacks and development standards in the Waterfront District Sub-Area Plan are consistent with and implement the SMP.

2.6 Applicants' Objectives

The applicants' objectives prepared for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Waterfront District, and listed below, reflect the Vision statements adopted over the past two decades of planning and public involvement and are the basis for the plans, policies and implementation strategies included in the Waterfront District Sub-Area Plan:

- Redevelop the industrial site into a mixed use, waterfront neighborhood providing opportunities for a range of uses and activities. Create a vibrant area that integrates water-dependent uses and open space with new office, retail, services, institutional, and residential uses, and enhances the economy and livability of the area.
- Connect the Waterfront District Redevelopment project with surrounding neighborhoods including the Central Business District by: ensuring that the redevelopment is compatible with adjacent areas; encouraging uses that complement, not replace, neighboring uses; and integrating new roadway, pedestrian access and trails with surrounding systems.
- Provide community benefits through the phased construction of public open spaces and beaches, pedestrian trails, and moorage for small vessels that fit within the overall intent of the redevelopment plan.
- Identify opportunities to restore and create habitat along the waterfront environment; creating an economically-viable redevelopment.

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- Ensure that redevelopment is compatible with environmental remediation efforts.
- Enhance the region's economic vitality by creating conditions that are attractive to a range of employment opportunities and businesses, including water-related industries, research and development ventures, goods and service establishments, and educational and cultural facilities.
- In conjunction with the City of Bellingham, construct an integrated and economically responsible infrastructure network and public amenities that adequately support phased, long-term redevelopment of the site and stimulate private investment in the project. The ability to provide the infrastructure and public amenity system should be derived from grants and the sale or lease of redevelopment parcels by the Port and from grants, bond financing and tax revenues by the City and other applicable fees and service charges. These sources of capital will be used to offset the initial and ongoing investment in infrastructure and amenities to minimize subsidy from the general tax base of the Port or City.
- Increase public access to the waterfront by developing pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to/from the site and an interconnected system of trails, viewpoints, walkways, streets, parking and boat moorage facilities. Use of non-motorized transportation modes will be a priority.
- Work with non-profit organizations and developers to provide opportunities for a mix of housing products affordable to a range of employees on the site and in the community.
- Work cooperatively with the City of Bellingham and the public to adopt a Sub-Area Plan and Development Agreement that provide the necessary predictability, consistency and expediency for long-term success of the redevelopment, and allow for flexibility to respond to market factors over time.
- Encourage sustainable and "green" development practices as part of future building and infrastructure design and construction at the site.
- Incorporate features into the planned marina to complement future mixed-use redevelopment, including: boat slip configurations, public walkways/small parks around the perimeter of the marina, and enhanced habitat opportunities.
- Continue to coordinate with state, federal and local agencies, tribes, organizations, institutions, the public and the private sector to facilitate redevelopment planning and implementation that is successful and an asset to the community.

