

# NEW WHATCOM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

## SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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PORT OF BELLINGHAM

October 2008



PORT OF BELLINGHAM  
*Washington State*

October 15, 2008

Mr. Tim Stewart  
Director of Planning  
City of Bellingham  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Shorelands and Environmental Assistance  
Environmental Review Section  
Washington Department of Ecology  
P.O. Box 47703  
Olympia, WA 98504-7703

**Re: Availability and Opportunity for Public Comment  
Supplement to Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
Proposed New Whatcom Redevelopment Project  
Bellingham, Washington**

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Port of Bellingham (Port) has been analyzing long-term redevelopment opportunities for the "New Whatcom Special Development Area" in Bellingham, Washington. The proposed actions associated with this transition are subject to review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). This letter provides notice to you and the agencies copied in the circulation list of the issuance of a Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, conducted under SEPA, and the opportunity for public review and comment on the document.

The Port and City of Bellingham (City) have been working together on a proposal to adopt and implement a Master Development Plan and Development Agreement for the New Whatcom site since January 2005. The proposal would, if approved, include land use and zoning regulations to transform the site from an historically industrial waterfront into a new neighborhood with residences, shops, offices, marine and light industry, institutional uses (e.g. Western Washington University), as well as parks, trails and shoreline amenities along Bellingham Bay.

634187.2/018258.00006

1801 Roeder Avenue / P.O. Box 1677 / Bellingham, WA 98227-1677  
(360) 676-2500 / FAX (360) 671-6411 / [www.portofbellingham.com](http://www.portofbellingham.com)

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A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) with a range of alternatives was published for review and comment in January 2008. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Port and City requested that the DEIS not be finalized, but rather the Port and City have an opportunity to negotiate a Preferred Alternative. Those negotiations were successful, and the Port has now prepared a Supplement to the DEIS (SDEIS) for the Preferred Alternative. The DEIS and the SDEIS are to be reviewed in combination as a package of SEPA integrated documents.

The Port and City will use a Master Development Plan as the basis for consideration of adjustments to local land use plans. Both parties also intend to enter into a Development Agreement in coordination with this effort that would include implementing land use regulations and identify infrastructure requirements, phasing and development standards. The proposed actions subject to SEPA review are described in both the DEIS and SDEIS.

Both the City and the Port are agencies with jurisdiction for the proposed Master Development Plan and Development Agreement. Under Interlocal Agreements, both parties have designated the Port as the SEPA lead agency for this EIS.

The following elements of the environment were analyzed in the SDEIS: Earth, Air Quality, Water Resources, Plants and Animals, Environmental Health, Noise, Land Use, Relationship to Plans and Policies, Population, Employment and Housing, Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Historic and Cultural Resources, Transportation, Public Services, and Utilities. For each of these elements, probable environmental impacts, measures intended to mitigate these impacts, and any significant unavoidable adverse impacts that may be anticipated are described.

The SDEIS has been prepared pursuant to SEPA, Chapter 43.21C RCW and the SEPA Rules (WAC 197-11-440 and 197-11-620).

Copies of the SDEIS have been distributed to agencies, organizations and individuals noted on the Distribution List. Copies of the SDEIS are also available for review at the following locations:

- Bellingham Central Library, 210 Central Way, Bellingham, WA
- Port of Bellingham, 1801 Roeder Avenue, Bellingham, WA
- City of Bellingham, Planning Office, 210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA

A limited number of printed copies of the SDEIS may be purchased at the Port of Bellingham's Administrative Office at 1801 Roeder Avenue. The purchase price is \$100 to cover printing costs.

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The SDEIS can be reviewed and downloaded at the Port's web site under Latest News at: <http://www.portofbellingham.com>.

Persons interested in receiving a copy of the SDEIS on CD (no charge) should contact Brenda Tate at 360-676-2500 or by e-mail at: [brendat@portofbellingham.com](mailto:brendat@portofbellingham.com).

You are invited to participate in the environmental review process on the New Whatcom Redevelopment Project through both your written comments and participation in a public hearing on the SDEIS. Comments are due no later than November 14, 2008, and can be sent by email to [sepaofficial@portofbellingham.com](mailto:sepaofficial@portofbellingham.com) or by regular mail to:

Andrew Maron  
SEPA Responsible Official  
Port of Bellingham  
PO Box 1677  
1801 Roeder Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98227-1677

The public will also be invited to submit written comments.

A public hearing will also be held to receive verbal public comments on the SDEIS. The meeting time, date, and location is as follows:

Thursday, November 6, 2008  
**6:00 PM – Close of meeting**  
Harbor Center Building  
Port of Bellingham  
1801 Roeder Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98225

After the written comment period ends on November 14, 2008, the next stage of the environmental review process will be preparation and issuance of a Final EIS. The Final EIS will include applicable responses to comments received on both the DEIS and the SDEIS.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this environmental review.

Sincerely,



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Andrew W. Maron  
SEPA Responsible Official

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cc: Robert Brenner, Western Washington University  
Allan Chapman, Lummi Nation  
David Dicks, Puget Sound Partnership  
Gregory Griffith, WA State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
Robert Kelly, Nooksack Tribe  
Tom McDowell, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Lucille McInerney, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Fran McNair, Washington State Department of Natural Resources  
David Stalheim, Whatcom County Planning  
Karen Swanson-Woolf, NOAA  
Randall Perry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Berry Wenger, Washington Department of Ecology  
Brian Williams, Washington State Department of Fisheries

**SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT  
ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
NEW WHATCOM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

**PORT OF BELLINGHAM  
BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON**

**Prepared for the Review and Comments of Citizens,  
Groups and Governmental Agencies**

In Compliance with  
The State Environmental Policy Act of 1971 (RCW 43.21C)  
and the Port of Bellingham SEPA Policies and Procedures

**October 2008**

## FACT SHEET

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### PROJECT TITLE

### **New Whatcom Redevelopment Project**

### PROPOSED ACTION

The Port of Bellingham (Port) has been analyzing long-term redevelopment opportunities for the New Whatcom site. The Port and the City of Bellingham (City) are working together to formulate and implement a Master Development Plan that would, if approved and implemented, be intended to transform the New Whatcom site (also known as The Waterfront District) into a new neighborhood with residences, shops, offices, marine and light industry, institutional uses (e.g. Western Washington University), as well as parks, trails and shoreline amenities along Bellingham Bay, including a marina (the marina would also be developed in the remediated ASB under the No Action Alternative). The Waterfront District would include substantial new opportunities for public access to the waterfront that do not exist under current conditions. Full buildout of the site would be expected to occur over at least a 20-year period.

The Port also envisions entering into a Development Agreement with the City that will further guide long-term redevelopment of the project site. As part of its efforts to plan and redevelop the site, the Port will propose amendments to the Port's *Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements* incorporating the Master Development Plan. Concurrent with the adoption of a Development Agreement, it is expected that the City will adopt a new Sub-area Plan for the area (to be known as the *Waterfront District Sub-area Plan*), along with implementing land use regulations and a Planned Action Ordinance, allowing for a change from industrial to mixed-use zoning.

The New Whatcom site includes approximately 216.3 acres of contiguous waterfront property and adjacent aquatic area in central Bellingham. The adjacent aquatic area associated with the New Whatcom site is included within the area analyzed in the *Whatcom Waterway Cleanup Site Supplemental EIS* (2007). Currently, the Port owns and/or manages approximately 148.9 acres of the site; the City owns approximately 21.2 acres and another approximately 46.2 acres of the site are held in State of Washington or private ownership.

## Draft EIS

A Draft EIS (DEIS) was issued in January 2008 that addresses the probable significant adverse impacts that could occur as a result of the approval by the Port of amendments to the *Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements*, adoption by the City of the Master Development Plan and implementing regulations, the approval of a Development Agreement between the Port and City, and potential future redevelopment activities on the site during the 20 year build-out horizon.

At the time the DEIS was prepared and issued, a preferred Master Development Plan (MDP) for the site had not been determined. Accordingly, a range of alternatives are addressed in the DEIS that represent an overall envelope of potential redevelopment that the site could accommodate (Alternatives 1 through 4 in the DEIS). The DEIS recognizes that features of the alternatives could be mixed and matched to arrive at the final Master Plan Development for the site.

## Supplemental Draft EIS

Subsequent to the issuance of the DEIS, Port staff, with input from the City, the public, and agencies, prepared a recommended Proposal that serves as the current redevelopment concept for the site and a "**Preferred Alternative**". This Preferred Alternative is the subject of this Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS). The mix of uses and level of redevelopment called for in the Preferred Alternative are within the range of redevelopment addressed in the DEIS (within the range analyzed under Alternatives 1 through 4).

The Proposed Actions for the New Whatcom site addressed in the DEIS are identified below:

### Proposed Actions of the Port of Bellingham

- Approval of amendments to the Port's *Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements*.
- Development of a proposal to the City of Bellingham for a Master Development Plan (MDP) for the New Whatcom Redevelopment Area (referred to herein as the Waterfront District).
- Approval of a Development Agreement between the Port of Bellingham and the City of Bellingham.



### Proposed Actions of the City of Bellingham

- Adoption of a Master Development Plan (MDP) for the Waterfront District (considered as a Subarea Plan under the Growth Management Act), allowing a change from industrial to mixed-use zoning.
- Adoption of Development Regulations for the Waterfront District.
- Approval of a Development Agreement between the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham. The Development Agreement will reference the implementing regulations for the site, along with infrastructure requirements, phasing and development standards.
- Adoption of a Planned Action Ordinance.
- Approval of future permits for infrastructure improvements, construction projects, and redevelopment activities within the redevelopment area over the buildout period.

The Proposed Actions evaluated in this SDEIS are the same actions as those contemplated in the January 2008 DEIS. The probable significant impacts that could result under the Preferred Alternative are addressed in this SDEIS and compared to those identified in the January 2008 DEIS. This SDEIS, together with the DEIS, comprehensively analyze the environmental impacts of the Proposed Actions.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

As indicated above, for purposes of environmental review, Port staff, with input from the City, the public, and agencies, prepared a recommended Proposal to serve as the Preferred Alternative for analysis in this SDEIS. The Preferred Alternative is based on the information provided in the *New Whatcom Redevelopment Project Draft EIS* (January 2008), ongoing public input, additional analysis and master planning, and coordination between the Port and the City, as well as other agencies, groups and stakeholders.

This Preferred Alternative represents the preferred land use intensities and densities on the site in light of: the Port's objectives as applicant; the Port's, City's and the public's vision, goals and principles; the existing and proposed regulatory framework (Comprehensive Plan,

Shoreline Master Program and other pertinent regulations); and economic and market factors. The Preferred Alternative is analyzed for two time periods – 2016 which represents an interim redevelopment stage, and 2026 which is assumed to represent buildout of the project.

Also, the City of Bellingham has requested that a rectilinear road grid option to support redevelopment of the New Whatcom site be analyzed in this SDEIS. This road grid option is known as the "Straight Street Grid Option". The City defined certain features for the Option, including maximum building heights, the road system, view corridor opportunities, and retention of various historic structures. The probable significant impacts of this Option are compared to those evaluated under the Preferred Alternative.

The alternatives analyzed in this SDEIS include, in summary:

#### Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative would be consistent with the applicant's objectives, as defined in the DEIS (see Section 2.4 of the DEIS). The Preferred Alternative is intended to be a medium density, sustainable development that features a diversity of uses that are complimentary to the downtown Bellingham Central Business District; an infrastructure network that integrates with and connects the waterfront to surrounding areas; and, a system of parks, trails and open space that opens up the Waterfront District to the community. The level of redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative would be within the range of redevelopment assumed for the EIS Alternatives in the January 2008 DEIS. Redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative would mix and match elements of Alternatives 1 and 2.

The Preferred Alternative is based on a modified street grid for long-term redevelopment of the Waterfront District. The new grid would be rotated at the top of the bluff that currently divides the Waterfront District from the existing downtown in order to provide efficient connections to downtown Bellingham and other surrounding areas, opportunities for formal view corridors, and, cost-effective engineering solutions for bridging the bluff and the BNSF railroad corridor. The Preferred Alternative would feature approximately 2.7 million square feet of mixed use redevelopment by 2016, and approximately 6.0 million square feet of mixed use redevelopment by 2026; at

buildout the Preferred Alternative would provide 33 acres of open space and parks. The Preferred Alternative also assumes development of a marina at the remediated ASB area and ongoing cleanup of portions of the site in conjunction with redevelopment.

The Preferred Alternative, therefore, represents a further refinement of the DEIS Alternatives 1 through 3 in the following key areas:

- Redevelopment density and mix of uses
- Onsite roadway grid and pedestrian/bike network
- Offsite road improvements (i.e., bridge connections)
- Grading/stormwater management
- Parks and shoreline habitat plan
- In-water work
- Sustainable “green” design strategies
- Historic buildings
- View corridors
- Development regulations.

#### Straight Street Grid Option

The “Straight Street Grid Option”, as defined by the City, would be similar to the rectilinear road grid evaluated under Alternatives 1 through 3 in the DEIS, except that there would be no 5-legged intersection at the Laurel St./Commercial St./Log Pond Rd. intersection. In addition, a bridge connection across the BNSF railroad tracks would not be provided at Commercial St.; the Cornwall Ave. bridge would be reconstructed subsequent to relocation of the railroad corridor. Many features of this Option (i.e. redevelopment density, mix of uses, amount of parks/open space, stormwater concept and marina concept) are assumed to be similar to those included under the Preferred Alternative.

The key differences between the Straight Street Grid Option, as defined by the City, and the Preferred Alternative would include: the orientation of the street grid and its connections to adjacent areas; the assumed building heights (height limit of 75 feet across the site); the assumed retention of certain historic buildings; and, the assumption of view corridors along road rights-of-way.

#### **LOCATION**

The New Whatcom site lies within the City of Bellingham’s Central Business District Neighborhood Planning area. The site is generally bounded by Bellingham Bay to the west, Roeder Ave. and State St. to the north and east, and

the BNSF railroad corridor and bluff to the south. The Central Business District Neighborhood is generally bounded by the Columbia and Lettered Streets neighborhoods to the north; the Sunnyland and York neighborhoods to the east, and Cornwall Ave. and the Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods to the south.

**PROPONENT/APPLICANT**

Port of Bellingham

**LEAD AGENCY**

Port of Bellingham

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

Andrew W. Maron  
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Bellingham, WA 98227-1677  
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**LEAD AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

Michael G. Stoner  
Director of Environmental Programs  
Port of Bellingham  
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Bellingham, WA 98227-1677  
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**PERMITS AND APPROVALS**

Port of Bellingham

- Approval of amendments to Port of Bellingham *Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements*.
- Development of a proposal to the City of Bellingham for a Master Development Plan (MDP) for the New Whatcom Redevelopment Area (referred to herein as the Waterfront District).
- Approval of a Development Agreement between the Port of Bellingham and City of Bellingham.

City of Bellingham

- Adoption of a Master Development Plan (MDP) for the Waterfront District (considered as a Subarea Plan per the Growth Management Act) allowing for a change in zoning from industrial to mixed-use.
- Approval of a Development Agreement between the Port of Bellingham and City of Bellingham. The Development Agreement will reference the implementing regulations for the site, along with infrastructure requirements, phasing and development standards.
- Adoption of Development Regulations for the Waterfront District.
- Adoption of a Planned Action Ordinance.

- Approval of future permits for infrastructure improvements, construction projects, and redevelopment activities within the New Whatcom site over the buildout period potentially including, but not limited to:
  - Shoreline Management Act Substantial Development Permit Approval
  - Grading Permit Approval
  - Building Permit Approval
  - Mechanical Permit Approval
  - Plumbing Permit Approval
  - Electrical Permit Approval
  - Fire System Permit Approval
  - Street and other City Right-of-Way Use Permit Application Approval
  - Transportation Concurrency Application Approval
  - Stormwater Management Plan Approval

State of Washington

*Department of Ecology*

- Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- Shoreline Substantial Development Permit Approval
- Coastal Zone Management Certification

*Department of Archaeological and Historical Preservation*

- Executive Order 05-05 Consultation and Review

*Department of Fish and Wildlife*

- Hydraulic Project Approval

United States Army Corps of Engineers

- Section 401 Permit Approval
- Section 402 NPDES Permit Approval
- Section 10/ Section 404 Permit Approval
- Puget Sound Dredged Material Management Program Approval
- Section 106 Consultation and Review

**SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS  
AUTHORS AND PRINCIPAL  
CONTRIBUTORS**

**EIS Project Manager, Primary Author, Land Use,  
Relationship to Plans and Policies, Population/  
Employment/Housing, Aesthetics/Light and Glare, and  
Public Services**

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Kirkland, WA 98033

**Stormwater**

KPFF Consulting Engineers  
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Seattle, WA 98101

**Earth, Noise and Air Quality**

Landau Associates, Inc.  
130 2nd Ave. S.  
Edmonds, WA 98020

**Water Quality**

A.C. Kindig and Co.  
9105 170th Ave. NE  
Redmond, WA 98052

**Plants and Animals**

Grette Associates  
2111 N 30th St.  
Tacoma, WA 98403

**Transportation**

The Transpo Group  
11730 118th Ave. NE, Suite 600  
Kirkland, WA 98034

**Visual Analysis (simulations)**

Primedia Group  
900 1st Ave. S, Suite 204  
Seattle, Washington 98134

**PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL  
DOCUMENTS**

Per WAC 197-11-620, this SDEIS supplements the Port of Bellingham, *New Whatcom Redevelopment Project Draft EIS*, January 2008. This SDEIS together with the DEIS comprehensively address the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action.

This SDEIS builds upon and incorporates by reference the following environmental documents that are also

incorporated by reference in the DEIS (2008): Department of Ecology, *Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy Draft EIS*, July 1999; Department of Ecology, *Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy Final EIS*, October 2000; Port of Bellingham, *SEPA Checklist for a Proposed Amendment to the Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements for Squalicum Harbor*, April 2004; City of Bellingham, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for: The City of Bellingham, Bellingham Urban Growth Area, Five-Year Review Areas and Whatcom County Urban Fringe Subarea*, July 2004; Department of Ecology, *Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy, Whatcom Waterway Cleanup Site*, October 2006; Department of Ecology, *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Bellingham Bay Comprehensive Strategy, Whatcom Waterway Cleanup Site*, September 2007.

These documents are available for review at the Port of Bellingham, 1801 Roeder Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225.

**LOCATION OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Background material and supporting documents are available at the Port of Bellingham, WA 1801 Roeder Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225 and at the City of Bellingham Planning Office, 210 Lottie St., Bellingham, WA 98225.

**DATE OF SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS ISSUANCE**

October 15, 2008

**DATE SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS COMMENTS ARE DUE**

November 14, 2008

**SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing has been scheduled for November 6, 2008, to receive verbal comments on the SDEIS, at the following time and location:

Date: November 6, 2008

Time: 6:00 PM

Place: Port of Bellingham Harbor Center

Conference Room

1801 Roeder Ave., Bellingham, WA 98225

**AVAILABILITY OF THE  
SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS**

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