

# Waterfront Framework Plan

CONNECTING BELLINGHAM WITH THE BAY

**DRAFT**

FOR PUBLIC REVIEW & COMMENT

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WATERFRONT FUTURES GROUP

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES  
& RECOMMENDATIONS**

**What do you think?**

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The Waterfront Futures Project is a waterfront visioning and master planning process sponsored and funded by the City and Port of Bellingham. The sponsors appointed a citizen taskforce, the Waterfront Futures Group, to take a fresh and independent look at the Bellingham Bay waterfront from the Urban Growth Area boundary at the north (just north of Cliffside Drive) to Chuckanut Bay on the south.

The members of the Waterfront Futures Group (the Group) adopted a mission statement:

*To lead a cooperative process that takes a fresh look at our waterfront and recognizes the diverse perspectives of our community. Our mission is to create a compelling vision for current and future generations and identify the steps to get us there.*

Events leading up to project initiation included development and adoption of the City Center Master Plan; Port of Bellingham (Port) studies of the waterfront area; Bellingham Planning Commission's recommendations for a separate waterfront planning process; and closure of major portions of Georgia Pacific's pulp and paper mill on the waterfront.

The Waterfront Futures Project (the Project) relies on assistance from other local, regional and state agencies, institutions and community groups, businesses, property owners and volunteers. The Project employs a Director and Administrative Assistant.

The Project created an extensive research process and record including ongoing and intensive public input, expert regional and national speakers, architectural and urban design assistance through a communications and design consulting team, and an interagency workshop on environmental and access issues. The Group shared their learning with members of the community through broadcasts of guest forums on the local government and educational television channel, through notebooks of all materials in the public libraries and through electronic access to the Waterfront Futures web site.

Their final products include a waterfront guide and a recommended Waterfront Vision, Framework Plan, and Action Plan entitled "Connecting Bellingham with the Bay."

## INTRODUCTION

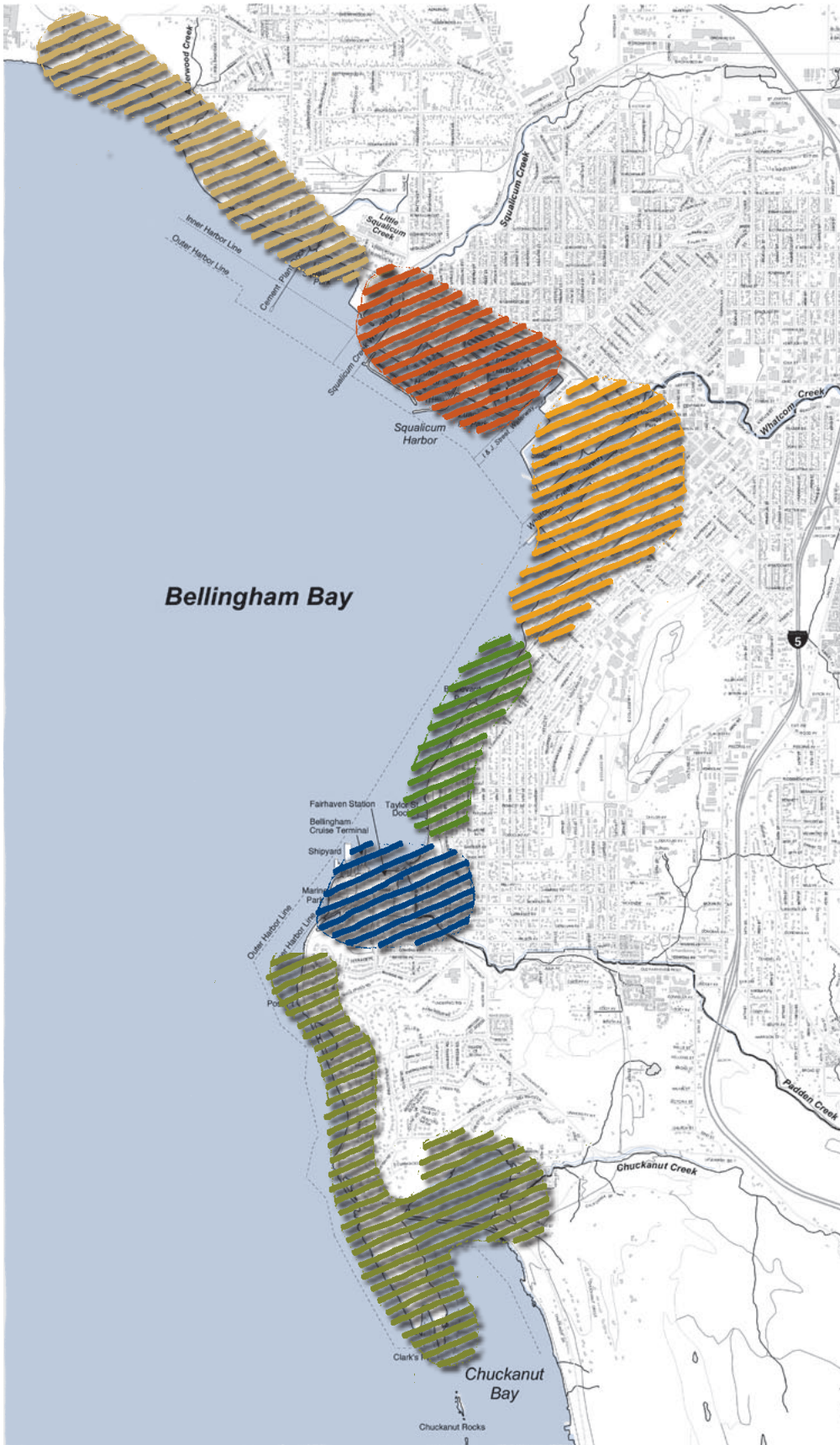
To create the foundation for the Vision and Framework Plan, the Waterfront Futures Group gathered advice, insights and knowledge from property owners and businesses, community groups and interested citizens. The Group gathered input from comments submitted online and at open houses, detailed proposals in the form of white papers and letters, and on-going discussion during waterfront walks, boat tours and public meetings.

Assembling and sorting out what they heard and learned occurred while the Group engaged in a facilitated retreat followed by a series of almost weekly work sessions. Review of draft materials followed discussion and debate culminating in direction for a draft Vision document. The Project published and broadly distributed (including publication in the local daily newspaper) the draft documents just prior to public open houses where members gave a brief presentation, took questions and had time to individually engage citizens in discussion. They repeated this process of work session deliberations followed by publication, release and presentation at public open houses in preparing and publishing the draft Framework Plan and Action Plan.

The following ideas emerged repeatedly during the work sessions and provided a foundation for decisions of the Group:

- ♦ Successful waterfronts are welcoming to all.
- ♦ Bellingham Bay and its physical landscape are part of larger natural systems.
- ♦ Jobs of the future will help shape waterfront redevelopment.
- ♦ Sustainability is a cornerstone for all future waterfront work.
- ♦ Education, training and apprenticeships increase our human capital and workforce capacity.
- ♦ Fishing and food from the sea will continue to be a significant part of our cultural heritage.
- ♦ Waterfront redevelopment consistent with community goals will require a significant public investment and in some cases public ownership as a catalyst for private reinvestment.
- ♦ The “best” of our waterfront is reserved for the benefit of our entire community.

# THE VISION FOR CONNECTING BELLINGHAM WITH THE BAY



The vision for Bellingham’s waterfront is forward-looking, bringing together aspects of our past, present and future that contribute to this very special place. Working together wisely over time, we can apply our ample resources and opportunities to support a healthy environment in a vibrant economy with access and amenities for all to enjoy.

# INTRODUCTION

long panoramas of delta and sand  
from the stack on the bluff to the dock  
on the shore. a long natural beach.



## Little Squalicum

This area presents an outstanding opportunity for habitat and beach restoration. Future facilities on the bluff could be models of sustainable development and uses.

a harbor for boats, a harbor to the bay.  
fishermen, mills and white tablecloth dining, our  
port to the bay.



## Squalicum

Future development could include a vibrant mixture of diverse facilities—housing, retail, office and public spaces throughout the area.

full of people, full of life!  
down to the water,  
up to the town!  
living, working, gathering here!



## City Center

This area could become an exciting mixture of housing, cultural facilities, waterfront access, public gathering places and waterfront activities.

The Cornwall Avenue landfill could include housing, open space, habitat restoration areas, public facilities and an overwater pathway connecting it to Boulevard Park and Fairhaven via the Taylor Street Dock.

long strands of park. stretching,  
connecting, people in the sun, people in  
the rain from village to town.



## South Hill & Boulevard Park

Boardwalks and improved beach access could become expansions of existing open space and trails, opening up additional recreational opportunities from Boulevard Park to Padden Creek.

the original village. bricks, books, the  
village green. kayaks, trains, ferries passing.  
connecting islands up to the town!



## Fairhaven

A direct connection from the Village Green to the shore would allow access to the water through and around the marine industrial area.

still wild still green.  
here we bow down to the water.  
a train whistle blows.



## Chuckanut & Edgemoor

Creating new kayak landings along the shore and a shoreline trail from Fairhaven and the Coast Millennium Trail could provide additional access for boaters.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Waterfront Futures Group developed the Framework Plan to illustrate how the Guiding Principles will apply to specific segments of the waterfront. The Vision document “Waterfront Vision: Connecting Bellingham with the Bay” establishes four overarching principles and a series of more detailed principles to use as a guide in achieving the Waterfront Vision.

## Reinforce the Inherent Qualities of Each Place on the Waterfront

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

## Restore the Health of Land & Water

1. Enhance or reintroduce natural systems
2. Create and restore habitat wherever possible
3. Remediate upland contamination
4. Protect existing natural shorelines
5. Seek opportunities to soften existing hardened shorelines
6. Tailor environmental cleanup strategies and remediation to planned use
7. Manage storm water to enhance estuarine habitats
8. Require sustainable practices in all development
9. Restore, enhance and expand beaches wherever possible
10. Connect proposed open space and natural areas to regional open space network and wildlife corridors

## Improve Waterfront Access

1. Develop strong connections between uplands and water
2. Provide links to regional trail systems
3. Provide multiple modes of access to each area of the waterfront
4. Provide convenient connections between different modes of transportation
5. Create and connect large and small parks and open spaces with a “braided” system of pedestrian trails
6. Enhance opportunities for visual access to waterfront areas
7. Provide the opportunity to walk the waterfront while respecting natural habitat
8. Help people find their way

## Promote a Healthy & Dynamic Waterfront Economy

1. Create new mixed-use areas on the waterfront for commercial, industrial, educational, recreational and residential uses
2. Support water-dependent activities and uses
3. Create conditions attractive to jobs of the future
4. Strengthen the tie between local jobs and resources
5. Provide public amenities and infrastructure to support redevelopment
6. Improve permitting processes to achieve the goals and principles of the Waterfront Vision

The Guiding Principles apply to all six areas. The bulleted statements beneath provide further detail unique to each area. The Group also identified a series of recommendations specific to each area. Grouping area-specific recommendations by segment recognizes that the recommendations often respond to more than one of the Guiding Principles. These recommendations describe changes or steps needed to move each area in the direction of the Waterfront Vision.












## INTRODUCTION

Finally, base plans, sketches and drawings illustrate how each area's vision may be realized. Drawings are conceptual and locations for uses and activities are provided as suggestions. Sites are inexact and are provided as ideas for further analysis to determine feasibility and design details in the implementation phase.

The third and final document is an Action Plan that describes steps that need to occur in the first three years in order to move forward on the recommendations of the Waterfront Futures Group.

# The Framework Plan



-  Transit Stop
-  Jitney Stop
-  Kayak Landing
-  View Point
-  Focal Point/View Tower  
Vertical Assist/Icon
-  Parking
-  Pedestrian Route
-  Transit Route
-  Vehicle Route
-  Hillclimb Assist
-  Causeway,  
Perforation

Legend for plan drawings on  
pages 9, 13, 19, 27, 31 & 37.