

Mayor Pike's 100-Day Plan Speech to Bellingham City Council Mar 3, 2008

Almost one hundred days ago, I stood before you to be sworn-in as Mayor of this remarkable community. At that time I set forth my ambitions and goals for the first hundred days of my term.

2007 was a personal immersion in the depth of intelligence, breadth of ideas and fundamental goodwill and good intentions of this community. I want the community to know that my first hundred days in office have been an immersion in the intelligence, creativity, goodwill and hard work of the staff and elected officials here at City Hall.

At its core, the 100 Day Plan is an act of good faith by the Pike Administration to the community. The 100 Day Plan functioned to drive real, concrete and meaningful steps toward addressing the issues this community cares deeply about.

The five broad objectives of the 100 Day Plan were:

1. Protect Lake Whatcom Reservoir
2. Promote Green Bellingham
3. Create a Healthy Waterfront
4. Support Neighborhoods
5. Streamline the Permitting Process

We understood we could not solve all of these issues in 100 days. However, we were committed to making a good beginning. Working together to implement the 100 Day Plan, we proceeded under the guiding principle that sound policy trumps politics. City staff was asked to revise any original action steps as necessary to achieve better outcomes. Moreover, I was pleased to find that a few of the projects proposed before I became mayor, mirrored initiatives that city staff was already working on. In those instances, I aligned my endeavors to support existing city efforts.

I am also using this opportunity to promote the "transparent" government principle that will be central to my administration. Readily accessible information is key to transparency. Within the 100 Day Plan Report, I not

only draw attention to the new initiatives and action steps that will be rolled out this year, but inform the community about ongoing City efforts that speak directly to 100 Day Plan objectives.

The simple truth is that as a community, we have a lot of important work to do. But it is equally true that we have much good work both underway and forthcoming. We should celebrate what is healthy and successful about the city hall-community partnership, even as we work to make it even better.

Not every action step of the 100 Day Plan was completed. However, even in those instances where my reach exceeded my grasp, we have made solid and meaningful movement toward the intended outcomes. If I had to do it over again, I would set the same high bar. Also noteworthy are a couple instances where the original action step was broadened, to be more far-reaching. Those are also discussed in detail in the report.

The effort to realize the objectives of the 100 Day Plan has been remarkable, and it is absolutely a collective achievement. This community has clearly articulated its values, and we at City Hall have collaboratively worked to manifest them.

I am honored to report to you our progress.

First, the Lake Whatcom reservoir. I regret reporting that we have not achieved all I hoped to deliver—but we nonetheless succeeded in delivering significant results. The original first action step called for the presentation to Council of an Interlocal Agreement between the City and County for joint management of the Watershed.

In October 2007, Mayor Tim Douglas and County Executive Pete Kremen presented a proposal for joint management of the Lake Whatcom watershed. Both Councils directed staff to move forward with this effort.

In January 2008, the County Executive and I agreed that the most efficient next step in the joint management project would be the hiring of the Lake Whatcom Watershed Manager. This manager, who will report directly to Executive Kremen and myself, will be tasked with the design, and subsequent administration, of the joint structure. The original action step was revised because I was not comfortable pushing through a hastily constructed management structure. Nor could I condone dragging out the project indefinitely. Executive Kremen and I came to the same conclusion: a watershed management specialist, in close collaboration with City and County staff, could best put together an appropriate and

sound design for joint management. Logic suggests the same individual facilitate, develop, and implement the project, rather than piece it together in an ad hoc fashion, with multiple players and consultants.

The County and City have now drafted a job description for the position of Lake Whatcom Watershed Manager and are resolving associated administrative issues related to a joint hiring effort. Next, the City will ask City Council to approve an interlocal agreement launching the search for a jointly appointed Lake Whatcom Watershed Manager.

Executive Kremen and I, along with our respective staffs, are confident that this effort will achieve the original ambitions of Mayor Douglas and County Executive Kremen, in providing greater “visibility, focus, and coordination of City and County efforts to protect the Lake Whatcom Reservoir.”

The **second action step** under the **Protect Lake Whatcom** objective called for the establishment of a Quality Retention Initiative to encourage on-site stormwater management of households within city limits. The intent of this action step was to reduce run-off into the lake.

After taking office I broadened this objective to include municipal efforts to reduce run-off as well, and also to include efforts to reduce lake-water phosphorus levels. To that end:

On February 12 of this year, Public Works was awarded a Department of Ecology grant to fund a 2 – 3 year project called the Residential Stormwater Retrofit Program. This program is directed at improving the quality of stormwater to Lake Whatcom through the retention of runoff on individual properties, through the distribution of specially fitted rain barrels that meter stormwater flows to onsite soils. Other program components include resident support and education, and the reduction of residential water flows into the sanitary sewer system.

Public Works is also planning several Low Impact Development demonstration projects in the Watershed, including a demonstration pervious driveway, and a demonstration home remodel.

In addition, the City is expanding the Northshore Drive resurfacing project into a bike/pedestrian project using a sand filtration technique over the roadway surface to increase phosphorus control and infiltration. The overall project will result in a net decrease in impervious area in the watershed, and lower direct run-off. Remaining run-off left from this site will outperform Department of Ecology standards.

Lastly, let me mention an ongoing effort. In 2007, Bellingham was the first city in the state to install a state of the art "Filterra" filtration system, which is the best currently available filter for reducing phosphorus. Over this year and the next, monitoring the performance of this filter will determine whether we should expand the use of this approach across the watershed.

The final **watershed action step was to review our City's water treatment system.** An outside consultant evaluated our current system and also considered alternatives to our existing techniques. The consultant report concludes that the existing treatment plant provides drinking water that exceeds all federal and state safety standards, and recommended that the plant remain in its current configuration. However, with the plant nearing capacity it likely faces major expansion over the next 5 – 8 years. The planning process will require detailed analyses to determine the best combination of treatment and disinfection techniques for the expanded facility.

The **second broad objective** of the 100 Day Plan was to **Promote Green Bellingham.**

Bellingham has a national reputation for environmental excellence. We are the first City in the state, and the *most successful community in the country* to be designated a Green Power community by the EPA.

Starting this January, we began reviewing City facilities' energy use. The anticipated conservation measures are expected to save the City nearly a hundred thousand dollars over each of the next 3 years.

As a City we have tremendous efforts underway on the Green Bellingham front, both in terms of forthcoming initiatives, and those that are already in place and ongoing. Not only that, but our staff are actively on the lookout for innovative new technologies and practices successfully implemented by other cities across the country and the world. For example, in Austin, Texas, every new home built over the next 8 years will be so energy efficient, that, with the addition of an optional solar energy system, they will consume no more energy than they produce.

It is inspiring for us, as a community to consider all that is possible, and I commend city staff for proactively keeping abreast of such practices.

Most inspiring to me, however, is the list of green programs practiced in a city called Bellingham, Washington. The inventory of our City's ongoing

and forthcoming green practices fills fifteen pages of the 100 Day Plan report. I have only enough time to tell you about a small fraction of the projects that are forthcoming this year. I strongly encourage citizens to check out a copy of the Plan Report from the public library, or to read it online through the city's website, so you can be as proud as I am of your City's progressive and proactive environmentalism.

Let me mention just a handful of upcoming initiatives:

The City has committed to meet the LEED "Silver" rating for all new construction of City buildings. Bellingham currently has over 30 planned or completed LEED building projects. The new Bellingham Art and Children's Museum is planned to not only be LEED-silver, but will have a green roof, thanks to a 2008 Dept of Ecology grant award.

Later this year, we will be entering Phase III of our Climate Action Plan, in which we will develop an action plan to further reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to reach our target levels.

On another front, Sustainable Connections has chosen "Toward Zero Waste" as its 2008 business challenge. Our Parks department is launching a "Toward Zero Waste" pilot project at Civic Field this summer, with the goal of diverting 50% of current solid waste away from landfill.

The City's resolutions and commitments to green practice range from our participation in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign and our endorsement of the Earth Charter to specifically targeted efforts, like the conservation and protection of the Post Point Great Blue Heron rookery. Our efforts range from the internal, like our City's own interdepartmental Green Team, to the external: from habitat restoration to green building to community partnerships.

I am strongly impressed with our existing green practices, but now it is time to take our commitment to the next level. Sustainability is a core value of the Pike Administration, and I believe all significant policy decisions – from economic development to environmentalism – should be refracted through the lens of sustainability. All across the country, and within our region, city governments are establishing sustainability programs. In the next few months, I will be adding an executive level sustainability function to City Hall, to centrally coordinate existing interdepartmental and community efforts, and to proactively identify opportunities for action.

On taking office, I had both publicly and privately expressed my reluctance to hire a CAO, or chief administrative officer, to oversee city

operations. However, recently, Linda Storck, who had been splendidly fulfilling this function, on a part-time basis, was called back to her full-time job in the Court system. This recent development, coupled with my commitment to a central sustainability effort, has convinced me that a full-time CAO appointment would be an elegant, efficient and cost-effective way to both continue the smooth functioning of our city, and to achieve this critical aim. I believe strongly that we can continue to flourish as a community and gift an enduring legacy to our children.

The third objective of the 100 Day Plan was to work toward the **creation of a healthy waterfront**. The first action step I set for us was to identify, in partnership with the Port, a list of early adoption projects for the waterfront. This is not as far along as I would have liked. However, I want to acknowledge that even as The Port of Bellingham and the City struggle to resolve complex infrastructural problems, we find ourselves in agreement on critical issues. Ultimately, it is these areas of consensus that will drive our early steps. Specifically:

First, we are in agreement about Areas 1 and 2. Area 1 is the land north of the waterway, which the Port wants to transform into a “Clean Ocean” marina, providing increased public access to the water, as well as restored salmon habitat. Area 2 is south of the waterway. The City’s vision is to develop Area 2 from the existing downtown out to the water. We are committed to the mindful management of the seam between downtown and the waterfront, which is absolutely vital to the success of the waterfront project. We don’t want to end up with “two towns” – a throwback to a century ago, when “Bellingham” and “New Whatcom” were separate towns. Nor will we allow our vibrant downtown to fade into a ‘ghost-town’ as a result of disconnected, suburban-style development on the waterfront.

Smart access and transportation planning are absolutely critical to the success of our early efforts in Areas 1 and 2. The transportation strategies we design today must provide initial access for clean-up and construction needs, yet later meet the long-term needs of the community.

Second, the Port and the City agree on the requirement for robust shoreline and upland parks. The City envisions at least 33 acres of parks and trails, with additional open space within each Planning Area.

By the way, you may have read the phrase ‘preferred alternative’ in the newspapers recently. It is this vision that I have just described to you, founded on what the public has been saying for years, and fleshed out with practical infrastructural and access strategies, that is the template for

what we the City are calling the 'preferred alternative.' We, the City, feel strongly that it is important to identify a preferred alternative, so that we can move ahead efficiently and logically, before critical windows close, and the millions of dollars the federal government is offering us, now, are given away elsewhere instead.

Returning to areas of agreement between the Port and City, we also both agree that the redeveloped waterfront should serve the diverse needs of our diverse community and provide a solid economic foundation for our community for generations. We envision an extension of the downtown neighborhood that includes new residential, commercial employment, retail, cultural and marine trade uses. We share a vision of a Western Washington University presence on the waterfront. We envision NOAA here, utilizing our deepwater facility.

Fourth, the Port and City are deeply committed to honoring and implementing the needs and ideas of the community, and to providing a variety of opportunities for active public participation in the redevelopment process.

Last, The Port and City are dedicated to the principles of smart growth and green practices, and to seeking practical means to implement these principles.

One of the best parts of my job as Mayor is the opportunity to talk with a lot of smart, creative, innovative people, political activists and business entrepreneurs alike. When I spoke to City Club last week, I shared some of the conversations I've been having with such people. "What if?" is a phrase that comes up often in these talks. For example:

"What if we went LEED platinum on the entire waterfront, setting the bar for the world for environmental excellence?"

"What if the waterfront were scaled for people, not cars?"

"What if, in the way that eastern Washington has agriculture, and Seattle has medicine and Microsoft, Bellingham became a national center for green industry and sustainability?"

These conversations are provocative and intellectually demanding. The reality we create can only be realized through vision, intelligent planning and leadership, and through the strong, vibrant partnerships between the City, Port and community.

As part of the 100 Day Plan, I had originally proposed an economic benefit analysis of redevelopment alternatives on the waterfront. However, as Mayor, I came to realize that our resources were better spent on an instrument that would actually implement our vision, rather than generating still more analyses.

A Public Development Authority, or PDA, is such an instrument. A PDA is a separate legal entity with a governing board made up of key community stakeholders and individuals with financial, legal and development expertise. PDAs have been involved in many successful development projects in our region, including the Village Square project in Seattle's International District, the Seattle Art Museum, and Tacoma's Foss Waterway. Let me emphasize a very important point: The PDA does not make policy. Rather, its role is to implement the vision and policy that we, the City articulate. Best of all, we anticipate that existing funds in the current waterfront budget would transfer over to support the PDA. I was very pleased to make this proposal to City Council earlier this month, because I felt strongly that this would be an intelligent and efficient way to drive the waterfront project forward. Last week this Council voted 6 – 0 to prepare an ordinance and develop a business plan to move ahead with the establishment of a Public Development Authority. I am tremendously excited about this opportunity.

The **fourth objective** of the 100 Day Plan was to **Support Neighborhoods**. Our community's neighborhoods are rich in history and character and civic commitment. The **first Neighborhood action step** called for the review of all Neighborhood Plans. Our Planning Department has reviewed all 23 of the plan proposals received at the end of 2007. We have recommended that:

1. The Sehome Neighborhood Plan and Samish Way Neighborhood Land Use and Urban Village plans be initiated.
2. The Silver Beach Neighborhood Plan be initiated, contingent on the neighborhood accomplishing the remaining work it has offered to complete.
3. The city sponsor design charrettes in Sunnyland and Fairhaven. A design charrette is a public involvement tool that allows neighbors to collaborate creatively with designers to formulate design solutions.

The City will also follow through with additional work program items that may be initiated by the Planning Commission or the City Council. In addition, we are putting together a phasing program to support the remaining neighborhood plan updates over the next five to ten years. The

simple fact is that we don't have the resources to simultaneously support all 23 plan amendments at this time. Our goal is to develop both the capacity of the staff and the capacity of the neighborhoods, so that we may continue our community's proud tradition of neighborhood based planning. To that end, we are putting together additional neighborhood skill-building workshops, as well as issue-prioritization and action-planning support.

To honor the hard work of the neighborhoods, and at the same time make judicious decisions that balance the needs of the City as a whole, is a high-wire balancing act in which there are no easy answers, only workable solutions. I am very proud of the tremendous effort and sacrifices that both neighborhoods and city staff have made on this front, and I am even prouder of the mutual goodwill that both sides share.

The 100 Day Plan also called for the establishment of a Code and Character Taskforce, and the scheduling of a second city-sponsored Planning Academy. Planning Academy II is scheduled for Spring 2008. This series of workshops is titled: Green Bellingham: Achieving Infill, Enhancing Character. The goal of the planning academy is to provide neighborhoods with a variety of tools they can use to implement their urban infill goals. Infill comes in all different flavors, from cottages to accessory dwelling units to shared access lots. My hope is that each neighborhood will carefully select the infill strategies that blend best with their own unique character. Let me be clear that the sort of transformation that I speak of here is evolutionary. In other words, my dream is that when my children's children walk through the neighborhoods of Bellingham in fifty years time, those neighborhoods will feel much as they do today. And my dream is also that when they step outside our city, they will be able to look upon the same forested hills and stretches of farmland – not asphalt – that you and I enjoy today.

The Code and Character Taskforce has been appointed, and is composed of community members representing the areas of community health, neighborhoods, local economies and green developers and builders. They will begin meeting this month to assist the City in designing curriculum for the Planning Academy. I am thankful again to have such a wealth of citizen expertise and civic passion in this community.

The **final objective** of the 100 Day Plan was the streamlining of the permitting process. The Planning Department has put a massive effort into transforming the old, cumbersome process into a new, efficient system. The frustrations of the old permitting process are well known – and not only to developers and builders. If you've ever tried to get a deck built in your

backyard, or to add a bedroom to your house, then I don't have to tell you about the shortcomings of the old system. Let me tell you instead, how the new permitting system will work. When a customer comes to the front desk of the Permit Center, the newly retrained front-counter staff will immediately conduct a completeness review. This first step alone will immediately save the customer 5 business days.

The accepted application will be assigned a project manager, who will be a liaison between the customer and the City, and who will track and support the application through the permitting process.

The application will go to one of 3 bins: quick, standard, or major project. A qualifying "quick" project would be, for instance, an open deck, or an addition of 500 square feet or less. A "quick response" permit will be expected to be reviewed within 7 business days.

Under the old permitting system, permit applications passed linearly through the technical disciplines: fire, building, utilities, stormwater, etc. If an employee was on vacation, the application got stuck on his or her desk. Moreover, if there were issues with the application along the way, the customer received multiple letters from multiple staff.

Under the new, streamlined system, the application will go to all technical disciplines simultaneously. The customer will receive only one letter, and will correspond with only one person – the permit's project manager – to resolve the issues.

The outcome of this overhaul is a permitting process that will offer outstanding customer service in terms of predictability and time savings. A pilot period occurred the week of February 25th, and full implementation began today.

To support these changes, the planning department has also made significant changes to its software programming and its internal structure. Keep in mind though, that to overhaul such a complex system is a bit like steering an aircraft carrier in the open sea. We have cranked the wheel as far as it will go. There may be a little lag before the rest of the ship comes around. We are confident, however, that customers will soon experience the wind at their backs.

And with that, I come to the end of my report to you on the 100 Day Plan. The whole thing can actually be summarized in three words: "we did it."

I was not Mayor when I put together the 100 Day Plan, in that short time last November between the election and my swearing in. Today I stand at the head of the complex organization that is our City government. The first hundred days have passed, and now hundreds of days lie before us. We may be on the threshold of national economic troubles. Certainly our own city budget is extremely tight. Yet, there are many more objectives and priorities that my administration is deeply committed to, in areas like social services, economic development, public safety.... I can tell you this for sure: throughout the next four years, this administration will continue to strive for outstanding public service, and for operational excellence. And, as your Mayor, I am dedicated to the mindful stewardship of the taxpayer dollar.

Above all, I am committed to my continuing conversation with you. When a proactive, energized city administration is engaged in the service of a proactive, energized community, a powerful synergy is created. The success of the 100 Day Plan, to my mind, bodes very well for the future of our community. The success of the 100 Day Plan only firms my abiding conviction that we are One Bellingham, and that we can move deliberately together into our good future.

~ Mayor Pike