



**MAYOR'S OFFICE**  
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## MEMORANDUM

To: Fairhaven Stakeholders, Mayor Kelli Linville and City Council  
From: Nicole Oliver, Project Manager  
Re: Update on Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan  
Date: January 10, 2012

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The City would like to express its appreciation for the input received since the release of the preliminary draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village documents on December 21, 2011, and throughout the project's progress. Your input is extremely important as the City works towards preparing the final draft of these documents that will be reviewed during the Type VI Legislative Process. In addition to your input, at this time the City is also consulting with various commissions to solicit input in each of their respective areas of expertise and concern. The current project schedule is as follows:

- Historic Preservation Commission: Introduction of Design Standards and regulations - Tuesday, January 10, 2012, 4:00 p.m., Council Chambers
- Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission: Overview of plan and regulations, Wednesday, January 18, 2012, 6:30 p.m., Mayor's Board Room
- Historic Preservation Commission: Feedback meeting on Design Standards and regulations, Tuesday, January 24, 2012, 7:00 p.m., City Council Chambers
- Transportation Commission: Transportation and Parking Chapters and parking regulations, Tuesday, February 7, 2012, 6-8 p.m., Mayor's Board Room

First and foremost, the City would appreciate receiving additional, specific comment from all stakeholders on the **content** of the current draft plan. In regards to concerns raised recently about the process, the City is adding an additional stakeholder feedback session, the details of which are still being worked out, to take place in early February. The overall project schedule remains in place, with Planning Commission public hearing still scheduled for March 15, 2012. In addition, the project team has created this memorandum to remind everyone involved about the specific details regarding this project.

### PROJECT SCOPE

As we continue forward, it is important to keep in mind the purpose and scope as detailed in the [Project Charter](#) posted on the project website. The Fairhaven planning effort is working within the existing parameters of and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Water Comprehensive Plan, Sewer Comprehensive Plan, Stormwater Comprehensive Plan, as well as other adopted city-wide documents and

regulations. Specifically, this planning effort did not include analysis of a broad range of development alternatives for an unplanned or underdeveloped area, such as Old Town or the Waterfront District. Rather, this effort was designed to compile, refine and reconcile the visions, goals and rules governing this important, existing and thriving district, and to address the long-standing issues of the current Design Review code. Staff has made this scope clear at each of the many public meetings conducted in 2010 and 2011.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Many of you recall that the City has been leading this project since 2010, and its genesis dates back five years before that. Extensive consultation has occurred with the City Council, the Executive Office, other City departments, and with stakeholders (residents, business and property owners alike) at numerous public meetings. Various technical studies and a thorough parking study were conducted. Various city-wide plans were consulted to ensure the proposal's consistency. View impacts were modeled using 45', 55', 65' and 75' height limits on the remaining vacant parcels, and those 3-D GIS layers were posted on the [project website](#). Finally, we obtained consulting advice on the historic preservation and design standards.

In addition to reporting back what we heard at each public meeting, on November 16<sup>th</sup> staff presented draft concepts that laid out key assumptions and core elements contained in the planning documents. As stated in that meeting, the purpose was to "see if we got it right." What we heard is that we did.

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind that there is no specific development proposed as part of this current planning effort, therefore additional specific analysis will be required at the time of any proposed development. Unlike a "green field" development, infrastructure has been in place for many years and confirmed in the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2006 to be appropriate for the existing land use designations and zoning, which currently includes areas of unlimited height.

## RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC CONCERNS

Specific responses to concerns listed in an email received last week from various property and business owners, as well as comments made to the City Council last night, are as follows:

1. **Concern:** The current Bellingham Comprehensive Plan designates Fairhaven as a Tier 1 Urban Village and this wasn't adequately addressed in the process.

**Response:** References to Fairhaven's Comprehensive Plan designation is described Chapter 1, and is identified as a "District Urban Center", (see pages 4 and 5). In fact, Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan also states that an Urban Village plan is not really necessary for Fairhaven, since it is already a fully-functioning, model urban village. The City embarked on this planning effort at the request of the stakeholders, as a City-led consolidated process to update the Neighborhood Plan, create an urban village plan, and to improve the design review code.

2. Staff draft land use proposal does not identify ultimate build out for Fairhaven.

**Response:** Land use projections, like other urban villages, are based on a 20 year projection for full build out. See page 12 of the draft for specific details on the redevelopment potential, including unit counts. For Fairhaven, the land use assumptions were able to utilize a development scenario based on what has actually happened in the last 10 years in Fairhaven (where successful development has occurred). The assumptions apply that same level of intensity to the remaining vacant and underdeveloped parcels. The land capacity assumptions may need to be re-assessed at the time of the next Comprehensive Plan update in 2016. Additionally, the [Fairhaven Urban Village Parking Plan](#) forecast model analyzed potential build out of the Haskell property as well; see page 17 for details.

3. Staff land use model uses the past 10 year history as the basis for the traffic policies.

**Response:** This is incorrect. The [Traffic Analysis](#), which will be attached as an Exhibit to the Final Draft and has been posted since November 2011, utilizes the same land use capacity assumptions that were updated from the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Traffic Analysis models level of service on major intersections serving Fairhaven from 2008 to 2032. The existing grid system is highly functioning and no major improvements are warranted.

4. The staff draft plan lacks critical information regarding utility demand and capacity.

**Response:** Assessing, planning and financing of municipal utilities is done via the City's [Comprehensive Plan Capital Facilities Element](#), as well as the City's [Sewer](#) and [Stormwater](#) Plans, and Water System Plan. Those documents were referenced by staff in the drafting of this plan, as they are the governing documents for such planning, financing and improving those systems. Fairhaven is home to some of the largest sewer pipes in the City, and has capacity for the land use assumptions contained in the plan. The only references to necessary improvements within the system are to the Post Point Wastewater Treatment Plant. We will ensure that those references are made more clear in the final draft.

5. The staff draft plan for parking is incomplete.

**Response:** This plan is a policy document, rather than a parking management system, and specific strategies would be constrained to an annual Comprehensive Plan review process if they were included in this plan. At the request of stakeholders, no specific management strategies are being imposed at the regulatory level for parking until conditions warrant such a change. As was described at the meeting where the parking plan was presented, the City is not going to implement significant parking changes in Fairhaven until the Downtown Planning effort is completed. Policy references were added in regards to future efforts to address the Parking District, and future work will be

guided by this document to address parking in Fairhaven. No changes to the Parking District are proposed at this time.

6. Open space and trail component lacks specificity and continuity.

**Response:** A map is a great idea, and we will work on adding one to the plan. Stakeholder design solutions proposed for south of Harris along 14<sup>th</sup> Street should be submitted to the Haggen Rezone legislative process which is a separate but concurrent process. 14<sup>th</sup> Street is within the urban village boundary only between Old Fairhaven Parkway and Larrabee Streets.

7. Stakeholder meetings in 2011 addressed the first stage in the planning process - listening.

**Response:** Two listening sessions occurred in November and December of 2010. Five public input sessions occurred in May and June, and a draft concept meeting in November, where a diverse array of public input, written and verbal, was received and documented as part of the public process. The active consideration by stakeholders of occurs during the legislative process - these additional meetings are designed to gain additional input prior to drafting the documents. The City welcomes specific comments on the draft from all stakeholders for consideration for the final draft.

8. Stakeholders have not been provided a forum to compare alternatives and select points of agreement.

**Response:** See answer to number 7 above. Again, the scope of this effort is different than some of our other planning efforts, as specified in the Project Charter cited above.

9. Compliance with SEPA and public participation requirements (Comprehensive Plan and GMA) is at risk.

**Response:** SEPA analysis is underway and will be completed prior to submittal to the legislative process. City advisory boards are not "agencies," but volunteer boards that are provided an opportunity to review and comment on comprehensive plan or code changes within their areas of expertise prior to the formal legislative process. Agencies will be notified of proposed plan and code changes per state law.

Again, we appreciate your concerns, and look forward to your feedback as we move forward to continuing on our schedule in order to complete this plan within our 2012 work program.

cc: Jeffrey Thomas, Planning & Community Development Director  
Ted Carlson, Public Works Director  
Project Team