

DRAFT
RESOLUTION NO.2012-02

A RESOLUTION BY THE BELLINGHAM TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGARDING THE UPDATE OF THE FAIRHAVEN NEIGHBORHOOD AND URBAN
VILLAGE PLAN

The Transportation Commission has reviewed the draft Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan with emphasis on the transportation and parking chapters and proposed parking regulations. The Commission has the following comments and recommendations:

OVERALL COMMENTS

The TC supports planning efforts towards maintaining, clarifying and improving Bellingham's model urban village in Fairhaven. We agree that the vision is critical in building upon those elements to ensure Fairhaven's long-term sustainability and vitality.

When recent Planning efforts focused on adopting one set of design guidelines and standards for all urban villages, they noted, "The new rules focus on creating high quality pedestrian environments that are safe, inviting, comfortable and attractive."

<http://www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/community-planning/urban-villages-planning/uv-design-standards.aspx>

The TC supports the **Key Planning Goals** identified on page 4. Our comments are intended to strengthen the policies and strategies for those goals – from a transportation perspective.

We recognize the need to properly manage automobile traffic and its associated parking demands and impacts on the Fairhaven Neighborhood. This will be a critical component to Fairhaven's future.

Four categories from Bellingham's working definition of an Urban Village (*see Attachment 2*) are especially applicable for transportation consideration within the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. They are #1 Walkability, #2 Connectivity, #8 Smart Transportation and #9 Sustainability. The Transportation Commission recognizes that an urban village by its nature will have a much stronger emphasis on travel by foot, bike and transit. This includes Comprehensive Plan Goal: *TG - 20, "Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements over auto-oriented improvements within Urban Villages and areas targeted for infill development."*

Note – The following comments reference the map on page 23 of the Design Standards which identifies Fairhaven Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets.

Transportation Demand Management (described as Parking Demand Management) – All of these strategies should be looked at as proactive approaches to keep and improve the Fairhaven Urban Village's people-to-people experience. The Transportation Commission supports the described phased approach to demand management and the emphasis on the pedestrian experience within

an urban village. These are positive approaches to assist businesses and the whole neighborhood.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clarify modal priority of pedestrian travel within the Commercial Core.
 2. Incorporate the principles of Transportation Demand Management into the Multi-Modal Circulation Chapter (as found in the Parking section), and –
 - a. Clarify responsibilities for monitoring triggers and implementing all 3 categories of Strategies within each Phase.
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PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Pedestrian Network in the Commercial Core

Bellingham's first Pedestrian Master Plan (nearing completion) is focused on the Primary Pedestrian Network. Fairhaven's Primary Network includes:

- Harris
- 12th/Finnegan
- Donovan/10th to Harris

These are included in the previously identified Fairhaven Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets. Additional streets not included in the Primary Network, but included in Fairhaven's Commercial Core include portions of:

- Mill
- McKenzie
- Larrabee
- Old Fairhaven Parkway
- 10th and 11th Streets

Thus, missing sidewalk segments will be addressed either by new/re-development or through funding sources for the Primary Pedestrian Network (e.g., TBD)

(Policy 6.2) "As new development or redevelopment occurs, add sections of sidewalk to fill existing gaps."

It is important to consider the entire pedestrian network in a dense pedestrian area such as an urban village. The Design Guidelines emphasize the role of the buildings in the streetscape in fostering a vibrant pedestrian experience through building orientation, frontage and human scale design elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Identify factors affecting the pedestrian experience from a transportation perspective – including sidewalk quality, traffic buffers, wayfinding, weather protection, sidewalk conflicts, human-scale street lighting.

4. Specify needed improvements within the entire Commercial Core pedestrian network (i.e., Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial Streets – apart from the Primary Pedestrian Network). For example:
 - a. Connected sidewalks (e.g., 11th, 13th, Larrabee)
 - b. Raised crossings (e.g., 10th/Mill)
5. Include pedestrian connections with the neighborhood to/from the Commercial Core and the Branch Library.

Walking Distances

The Parking Plan cites a 1990 study to support the statement that “users (of parking) typically want to park as close to their destination as possible”. This statement is repeated frequently within the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. We urge caution in applying this statement universally – because of the many factors that affect trip purpose and walking experiences from auto parking to destinations.

RECOMMENDATION

6. Any further planning for automobile parking should also consider pedestrian infrastructure from parking locations to/along the routes to Commercial Core destination (e.g., sidewalk, streetlights, perception of unsecured parking area, surface of unpaved parking lots, wayfinding).

Arterial Street Cross-Sections

The Design Standards describe a focus toward “human-scale design and development”. In order to further these principles along the arterials, design elements – such as drive lane widths and street trees – that encourage vehicle travel speeds ≤ 25 mph would promote a safe and appealing travel environment for all. We do not recommend travel lane widths of 14’ or 16’ – with or without Sharrows.

Harris Street is a great opportunity to strengthen the visual connection between the waterfront & transportation hub (Amtrak, Ferry Terminal & Greyhound) and the Commercial Core. It is an important gateway, therefore, it is important to make it appealing for people to travel on foot and bike (with travel gear) between the Commercial Core and the transit hub or Marine Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Harris – Reduce travel lane widths on truck routes (Harris) to COB truck route standard 12’ feet maximum – narrower on other arterials.
8. Harris – Include minimum 10’ sidewalks on both sides of Harris (with the proposed street tree buffer between the curb).
9. Harris – If any pocket or center turn lanes are utilized at intersections on Harris west of 10th, incorporate a landscaped median for minimized crossing distances and traffic-slowing effects.

10. Harris – Revise the Harris Street Design standards (p.42) as below:
- Use bike lanes on both sides of Harris.
 - Insert bike lanes between parking and curb on the south side of Harris between 4th and 6th
 - Increase the widths of planting strips on both sides.
 - Increase the sidewalk width on the north side.
11. Mill, Finnegan & 12th (intersections near the branch library) – Prioritize improvements for pedestrian access: Include considerations for the following options – narrowing the street into a one-way segment northbound, or creating a dead-end with the potential for increased space for angled street parking.

Pedestrian Emphasis

As a model urban village, Fairhaven would be the best location to incorporate several pedestrian-only streets in the Commercial Core. The Transportation Commission heard testimony from the neighborhood about “pedestrian alleys”. We encourage those thoughts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Explore best locations for pedestrian-only streets – building upon the experience of closing roads during special events.
13. One possibility to consider – Create a pedestrian-only zone at 10th/Mill to Village Green and around the entire block at 11th to Harris. Special surfaces and access could be designated for deliveries and Village Inn parking.

Pedestrian Network in the Residential Areas

We understand the Fairhaven neighborhood prefers local streets as currently built – i.e., narrow streets without curbs, gutters or sidewalks. The Transportation Commission recommends protective measures to ensure cut-through traffic and/or travel speeds do not increase.

BICYCLE TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Improvements for bicycle travel provide the opportunity to get more people to the Commercial Core for less expense, less noise, less road congestion and less air pollution than the equivalent in motor vehicles. Because these are all concerns expressed for the future of Fairhaven, transportation demand management reduction strategies are crucial.

We want to encourage the majority of people who would bike (especially those with children), but who are cautious and concerned about their proximity to vehicles – and prefer separation of travel lanes before venturing out. “Sharing the lane” with 2 ton vehicles is a discouraging factor for most people when choosing to ride a bike. Considering these people in particular, we add the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Incorporate separated bicycle travel lanes along all arterials (12th, Finnegan, Harris) – at a minimum: striped bike lanes.
 15. Replace proposed “bike bypass” with above-mentioned separated lanes.
 16. Explore possible bike boulevard locations and purpose in the Bike Master Plan process. Include 14th for discussion.
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TRANSIT TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The TC endorses all robust discussions with WTA to improve access and increase ridership from the Amtrak/Greyhound station, WWU and other parts of Bellingham – including downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. We would like to see further information from WTA regarding their plans for addressing the identified transit policies.
 18. See above Pedestrian Travel recommendation for Mill Street intersection (Finnegan, 12th, and Mill) as it relates to pedestrian crossing near the transit stop.
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AUTO TRAVEL – SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Much of the concern for auto travel *TO* Fairhaven seems to focus on what to do with the car, once there. The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes policies to reduce parking and shift to non-motorized modes (*see Attachment 1*). We support the Fairhaven Plan’s efforts to align with these Comprehensive Plan policies and goals. We support recommendations to improve wayfinding (especially to assist in finding parking locations & Commercial Core destinations) that would diminish the “drive around in circles” congestion.

Auto Parking

The Transportation Commission supports direction in the plan to improve parking management. All of these strategies should be looked at as proactive approaches to keep and improve the Fairhaven Urban Village’s people-to-people experience. The Transportation Commission supports the described phased approach to parking demand management and its emphasis on the pedestrian experience within an urban village.

The parking structure analysis focused on the site feasibility of one location and noted the preferred topography of an adjoining private parcel. It is our understanding that no further work will occur for a parking structure at the studied location.

Any further parking structure analysis should include context or location – in addition to topography. Drawing more vehicles into the heart of the Commercial Core could have a detrimental effect on the very character of Fairhaven currently enjoyed by so many.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 19. **Parking section** – Incorporate into the Transportation chapter.
- 20. **Parking Management Strategies** -- Clarify responsibilities for monitoring triggers and implementing all 3 categories of Strategies within each Phase. Implement Reduction Strategies earlier in the Phases.
- 21. **Parking Analysis** -- When parking lots or structures are considered (on-street and off-street), these impacts should be included within the scope:
 - a. Identify the specific market or need that is to be addressed (e.g., employees, out-of-town visitors, neighbors)
 - b. Quantify the vehicle impact on any street that would feed to that parking.
 - c. Include consideration of how turnover rates would alter the vehicle impact on these streets.
 - d. Identify how different parking prices would affect parking demand – and the usage numbers anticipated.
- 22. **Angled Parking** - Policy 4.2 (p. 28) Include the Parking Study comment in policy 4.2: Regarding the potential use of “back-in” (aka “head-out”) angled parking with its numerous safety benefits for passengers (especially children) and other motorists.

PASSED by the City of Bellingham Transportation Commission
this _____ day of February, 2012

Signed _____
Chair, City of Bellingham Transportation Commission

Attachments included:

ATTACHMENT 1

**Comprehensive Plan
Transportation Goals and Policies**

ATTACHMENT 2

Bellingham Urban Villages...A Working Definition

ATTACHMENT 1

Comprehensive Plan**Transportation Goals and Policies – Applicable to Fairhaven Plan****Goals – Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

TG-20 Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements over auto-oriented improvements within Urban Villages and areas targeted for infill development.

Goals - Alternative Transportation Mode Shift

TG-28 Set target goals to increase the mode share of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips and reduce automobile trips as a percentage of total trips, as listed below.

| Mode | 2004 | 2010 | 2015 | 2022 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Automobile | 87% | 84% | 80% | 75% |
| Transit Bus | 2% | 3% | 4% | 6% |
| Bicycle | 3% | 4% | 5% | 6% |
| Pedestrian | 8% | 9% | 11% | 13% |

(Note: 2004 data from FTA/Social Data Study)

Goals - Parking Supply Reductions

TG-33 Review parking requirements for major commercial and industrial uses for the purpose of reducing the supply of parking thereby providing a disincentive to automobile use.

TG-34 Establish reduced parking requirements for transit-oriented development within master-planned Urban Villages and along and within ¼ mile of the WTA Primary Transit Network while ensuring that there will be minimal impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

TG-35 Encourage the “unbundling” (separate pricing) of parking spaces associated with residential development in Urban Villages to promote reduction in ownership of multiple automobiles.

TG-36 Encourage the provision of car-sharing with new residential development within Urban Villages to reduce the residential parking demand.

TG-37 Establish parking reduction allowances for residential units in Urban Villages and within ¼ mile of the WTA Primary Transit Network that require each unit to receive WTA bus passes in perpetuity.

Policies – Transportation Demand Management

TP-39 Encourage use of non-automotive travel modes by developing parking management plans. Mechanisms to be considered include:

- An emphasis on short-term parking in retail areas;
- Market-based pricing of on-street parking meters to encourage short-term day time parking;
- Incentive-based pricing in garages to encourage long term day time parking;
- Reduction of free or subsidized employee long-term parking availability;
- Re-evaluation of appropriate minimum and maximum parking ratios for development proposals; and
- Elimination of “free” public parking in Urban Villages.

TP-40 Consider revisions to current zoning code requirements for the area adjacent to the CBD, Urban Villages, and major retail districts, as part of a parking management plan designed to

reduce the minimum number of on-site parking spaces required for development and to increase preferential space and lower costs for car pool and van pool parking in private developments.

TP-41 Consider imposing a maximum number of parking spaces allowed within Urban Villages and along the WTA Primary Transit Network where high frequency transit service exists prior to or concurrent with development.

TP-42 Support the location of safe new or expanded park-and ride and car pool lots and support increased safety measures in existing park-and-ride and car pool lots.

TP-43 Encourage the use of common parking facilities among compatible, adjacent land uses where feasible.

TP-44 Provide preferential space and lower costs for car pool and van pool parking within the public right-of-way, and public facilities, where feasible

ATTACHMENT 2

Bellingham Urban Villages...A Working Definition

<http://www.cob.org/documents/planning/urban-villages/what-is-an-urban-village-summary.pdf>

Urban Villages are activity centers that provide pleasant living, shopping, and working environments; strong pedestrian accessibility; adequate, well located open spaces; an alternative, well connected street system; and a balance of retail, office, residential and public spaces.

Ten Key Principles of the Urban Village**1. Walkability**

Most things are within a 10 minute walk of home and work
Pedestrian friendly street design
Pedestrian streets free of cars in special cases

2. Connectivity

Interconnected street grid network disperses traffic & eases walking
A hierarchy of narrow streets, boulevards, and alleys
High quality pedestrian network and public realm makes walking pleasurable

3. Mixed-Use & Diversity

A mix of shops, offices, services recreational activities, apartments, and homes
Mixed-use within neighborhoods, within blocks, and within buildings
Diversity of people - of ages, income levels, cultures, races and lifestyles

4. Mixed Housing

A range of types, sizes and prices in closer proximity, such as:
Cottages; Single family detached and attached; Multi-family; Accessory; Upper floor rentals over retail; Condominiums

5. Quality Architecture & Urban Design

Emphasis on beauty, aesthetics, human comfort, and creating a sense of place
Special placement of civic uses and sites within community
Human scale architecture & attractive surroundings nourish the human spirit

6. Traditional Neighborhood Structure

Discernable center and edge
Public space at center, and quality public realm
Public open space designed as civic art
Contains a range of uses and densities within 10-minute walk

7. Increased Density

More buildings, residences, shops, and services closer together
New Urbanism design principles are applied at the full range of densities

8. Smart Transportation

A network of high-quality public transit connecting cities, towns, and neighborhoods together
Design that encourages a greater use of bicycles, rollerblades, scooters, and walking as daily transportation

9. Sustainability

Minimal environmental impact of development and its operations
Eco-friendly technologies, respect for ecology and value of natural systems
More efficient use of public infrastructure and services
Energy efficiency
More walking, less driving

10. Quality of Life

Taken together, these principles add up to a high quality of life well worth living, and create places that enrich, uplift, and inspire the human spirit.