



City of Bellingham Neighborhood Plan **SEHOME**

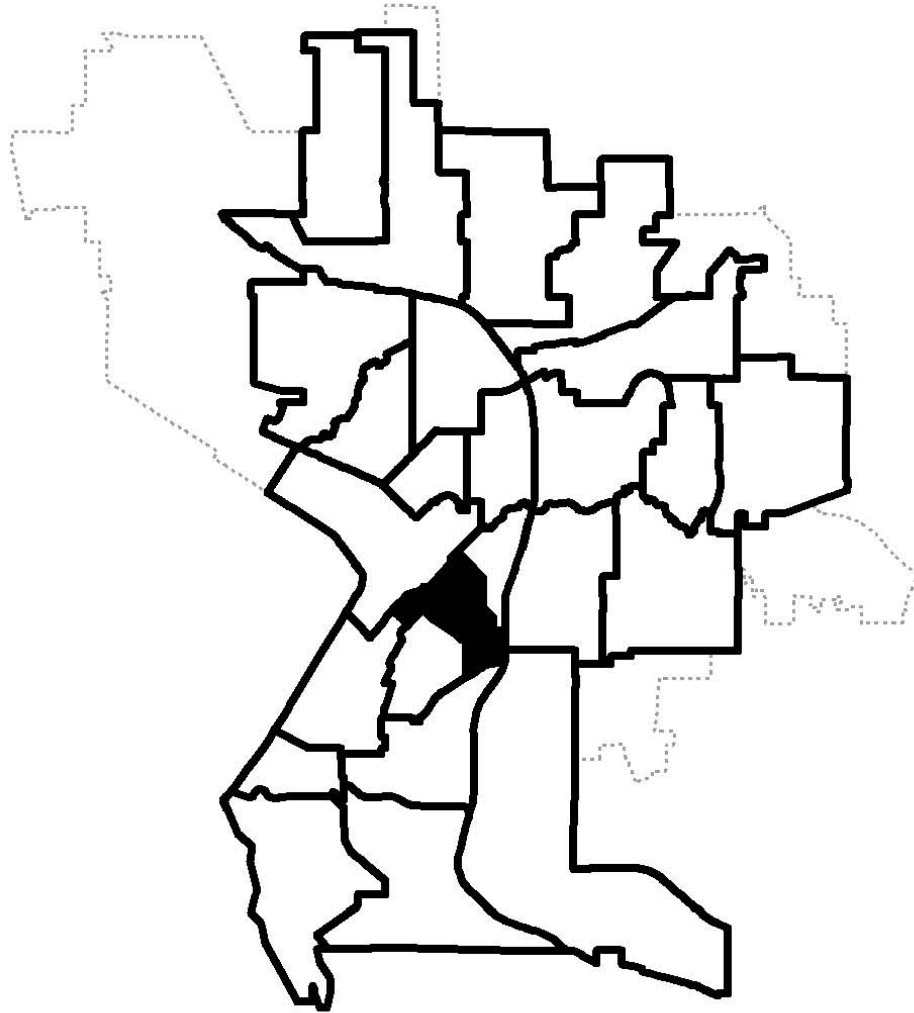


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1: Neighborhood Character

Chapter 2: Subarea Descriptions and Land Use Designations

[Sehome Neighborhood Zoning Map](#)

[Sehome Neighborhood Table of Zoning Regulations \(LINK ONLY\)](#)

[Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan](#)

Chapter 3: Neighborhood Design

Goals, Policies and Proposals

Chapter 4: Housing

Goals, Policies and Proposals

Chapter 5: Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Goals, Policies and Proposals

Chapter 6: Public Facilities, Utilities

Goals, Policies and Proposals

Chapter 7: Transportation/ Circulation

Sehome Neighborhood Circulation Map

Goals, Policies and Proposals

REFERENCES AND LINKS

City-wide Plans:

[City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan](#)

[City of Bellingham Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan](#)

[City of Bellingham Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan](#)

[City of Bellingham Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plans](#)

National Register of Historic Places Nominations in the Sehome Neighborhood:

[Sehome Hill National Historic District](#)

[Multiple Property Listing for CDB Commercial Buildings](#)

[Hotel Laube](#)

[YWCA](#)

[Morse House](#)

[JJ Donovan House](#)

Additional Reading:

[At Home on the Hill](#) (full citation)

Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to identify goals, set guiding policy and make related proposals that will help guide development in the Sehome Neighborhood over the next 20 years. The 2011 Sehome Neighborhood Plan represents the first major review (excluding the major planning effort of the *Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan*, adopted in 2009) of neighborhood planning priorities in Sehome since the first plan was developed in 1980.

Definitions of terms used throughout the Neighborhood Plan are provided for clarity:

- Goal:** A desired result that is envisioned, planned for and committed to, often set within a finite time period by setting deadlines.
- Policy:** A governing principle or set of principles that supports general goals and mandates, and is intended to guide or constrain actions.
- Proposal:** A suggestion put forward for consideration.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

All of Bellingham's Neighborhood Plans are a part of the [Bellingham Comprehensive Plan](#) and are designed to provide a policy framework specific to each neighborhood. Neighborhood Plans help convey important information relating to the valued qualities of character and help define the "vision" for the future. Some common elements that should be included in all neighborhood plans are area character, infrastructure requirements, and City-wide and neighborhood-specific goals and policies.

The Planning Process

Many people working as volunteers through the Sehome Neighborhood Association or its committees have contributed to the information gathering, analysis and writing required to produce this Plan update. The Samish Way Urban Village planning process occurred between June 2008 and November 2009 and is included as part of the Sehome Neighborhood Plan. The Neighborhood Plan presents a compilation of the ideas and suggestions made prior to, during and after the Samish Way Urban Village planning process, and while it is a relatively accurate representation of the neighborhood sentiment as a whole, it is anticipated that amendments may need to be made over time.

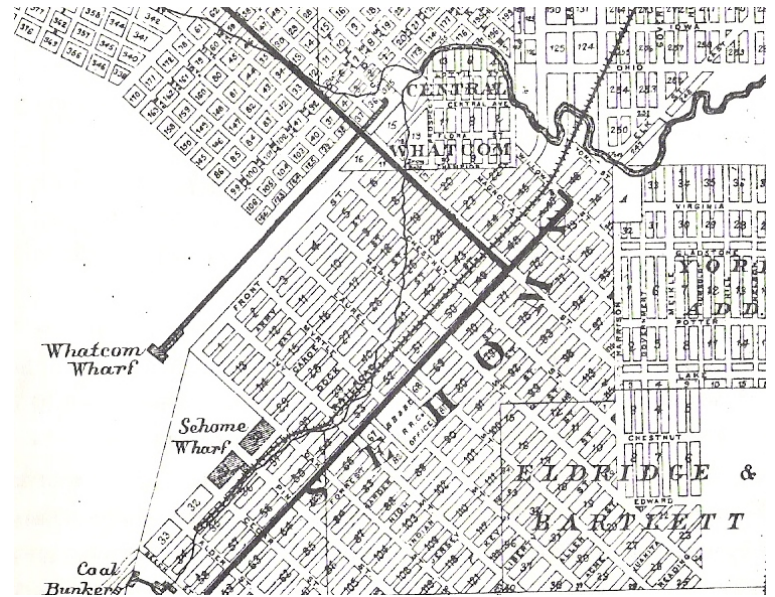
Chapter 1: Neighborhood Character

History

Most of today's Sehome Neighborhood lies within the former town of Sehome, one of four towns that consolidated in 1904 to become the City of Bellingham. (The other early towns were Whatcom to the north, and Fairhaven and Bellingham to the south). Settled in 1854 around the Sehome Mine at the foot of Sehome Hill, the town of Sehome grew slowly around the mining operations of the Bellingham Bay Coal Company. The name "Sehome" was derived from the mine superintendent's Clallam Indian father-in-law, "S'yah-whom."

Mining operations ended in 1878, but a decade later the coal company was reinvented as the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company (BBIC) to capitalize on the extensive mine operation land holdings. In 1890 the BBIC logged Sehome Hill, a town site was cleared, and new streets of Holly, Magnolia, Chestnut, Maple, Laurel, and Rose Streets were cut through the forest and extended east and west, graded and planked. Additional growth was prompted in 1893 when Sehome was chosen by the State of Washington for a western Normal School, today known as Western Washington University (WVU). Gradually the center of the town of Whatcom moved southeast along Holly Street to join the town of Sehome.

In the early 1930s the old Maple Valley Road ran through the lowlands on the eastern side of the neighborhood, and in 1936 became part of Highway 99, also known as Pacific Highway 1, which ran along the West Coast from Mexico to Canada. By the mid-1950s this main route into Bellingham, currently known as Samish Way, was developed with auto-oriented businesses such as gas stations and motels.



1890 map of the Town of Sehome.



View looking southwest down Elk Street (today's State Street), Sehome, 1890. Elk Street is wood planked -- wagon in foreground is loaded with more planking to fill an exposed area. The Sehome Hotel (upper left) marks the corner of Berry Street. Photo courtesy Whatcom Museum Photo Archives.

The Area Today

The eclectic character of today’s Sehome Neighborhood grew out of the early mining, logging, speculation and institutional interests and marks the human activities that have occurred over the last 150+ years. Today, approximately 90% of Sehome is developed and the population density is among the highest in the City. The dynamic energy resulting from the density complements the distinctive character of the neighborhood which is defined by its setting, views of natural features, and numerous historic buildings.



Sehome Neighborhood from downtown. The YWCA building is in foreground, lower left.

Wrapped around Sehome Hill, a steep bedrock formation rising 650 feet from Bellingham Bay, the neighborhood offers excellent views of the city and the Canadian mountains to the north, Bellingham Bay to the west and Mount Baker to the east. The Sehome Hill Arboretum, a 165-acre forested area designated as a natural area, creates a dramatic wooded backdrop to the neighborhood and defines its southern and western borders. Most residential areas have mature landscaping and there are several tree-lined arterials in the neighborhood.



Sehome Neighborhood from Toledo Hill. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Sehome has evolved over time and presently has a diverse collection of building types, styles, ages and sizes. The neighborhood’s variety of historic houses range from high-style Victorian-era mansions to middle-class Craftsman-style bungalows and modest cottages of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many historically significant religious, commercial, and multi-family apartment buildings remain in the neighborhood. Along the Samish Way corridor are many mid-20th century, post-modern and contemporary buildings still remain.

Residential buildings are a mix of single- and multi-family forms, most over 50 years of age, and many are eligible for listing in the Local, State and / or National Historic Registers. Four buildings are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the 1890 Donovan House (1201 N. Garden Street); the 1895 Morse House (1014 N. Garden Street); the 1915 YWCA Building (1026 N. Forest Street); and the 1903 Hotel Laube (1226 North State Street). The Sehome Hill National Historic District was listed in the National Register in 2001 and includes 153 contributing properties within its boundaries.¹

Sehome’s density is due in part to small platted 55’ x 125’ lots and the zoning of much of the neighborhood as high-density multi-unit housing as well as the conversion of many large older houses near WWU into rental houses and apartments. Many single-family housing forms remain in multi-family zoned areas and have been rented as apartments. Others have been demolished and replaced with multi-family units that range in age, design quality and materials.

There are also large and medium-sized apartment buildings and condominiums in the neighborhood. In addition to long-term renters, Sehome’s proximity to WWU makes it popular for rentals to college students. A mix of commercial businesses are located along the arterials of Samish Way and State, Forest, Holly and Ellis Streets.

¹ The National Register is an honorary designation and imposes no regulations on residential property owners.

Vision for the Future

In the year 2030 Sehome has become one of the most desirable, dynamic and interesting neighborhoods in the City of Bellingham. Sehome neighbors continue a long history of community involvement and positive relations with City departments. The neighborhood has evolved into an even more walkable, bikeable, and diversely populated community. Over the years, many of the numerous historic homes, apartments and commercial buildings throughout the neighborhood have been beautifully restored, rehabilitated and creatively reused.

Commuters take advantage of bike and pedestrian routes connecting the neighborhood to the arboretum, the university, downtown, the waterfront district and the York Neighborhood. Way-finding signage, pedestrian-scaled streetlights and strategically placed landscaping encourage use and improve safety for pedestrians. Additions to historic houses and new construction blend in with and are compatible with their historic surroundings. The generous landscaping strips between sidewalk and street are planted with street trees, creating a pedestrian experience that lures many out of their cars. Many opt for a stroll over the hill through the Sehome Hill Arboretum or *via* one of the many connecting footpaths that lead to the downtown core.

Upon entering the area from I-5 exit and the Bill McDonald Parkway visitors enter into the neighborhood through an urban village, bustling with shops, restaurants, hotels and other services and a mix of apartments, condominiums and townhouses. Pedestrians and bicyclists abound along the tree-lined streetscape, diners sit in sidewalk cafés and shoppers linger and visit on the expansive sidewalks. The area feels comfortable, bright, and is connected to the historic residential areas both physically and visually by the residential streets, greenways and trails that lead out of the village proper.

The historic houses in the Sehome Hill National Historic District have been restored and rehabilitated. The dramatic backdrop of the Sehome Arboretum rising behind the peaked roofs and the narrow tree-lined streets contribute to the feeling, setting and association of the district and gives one the distinct impression of a different era. Many of the residents of the historic district moved there because of the Craftsman, Four-Square and Victorian era style houses and have maintained or restored their homes.

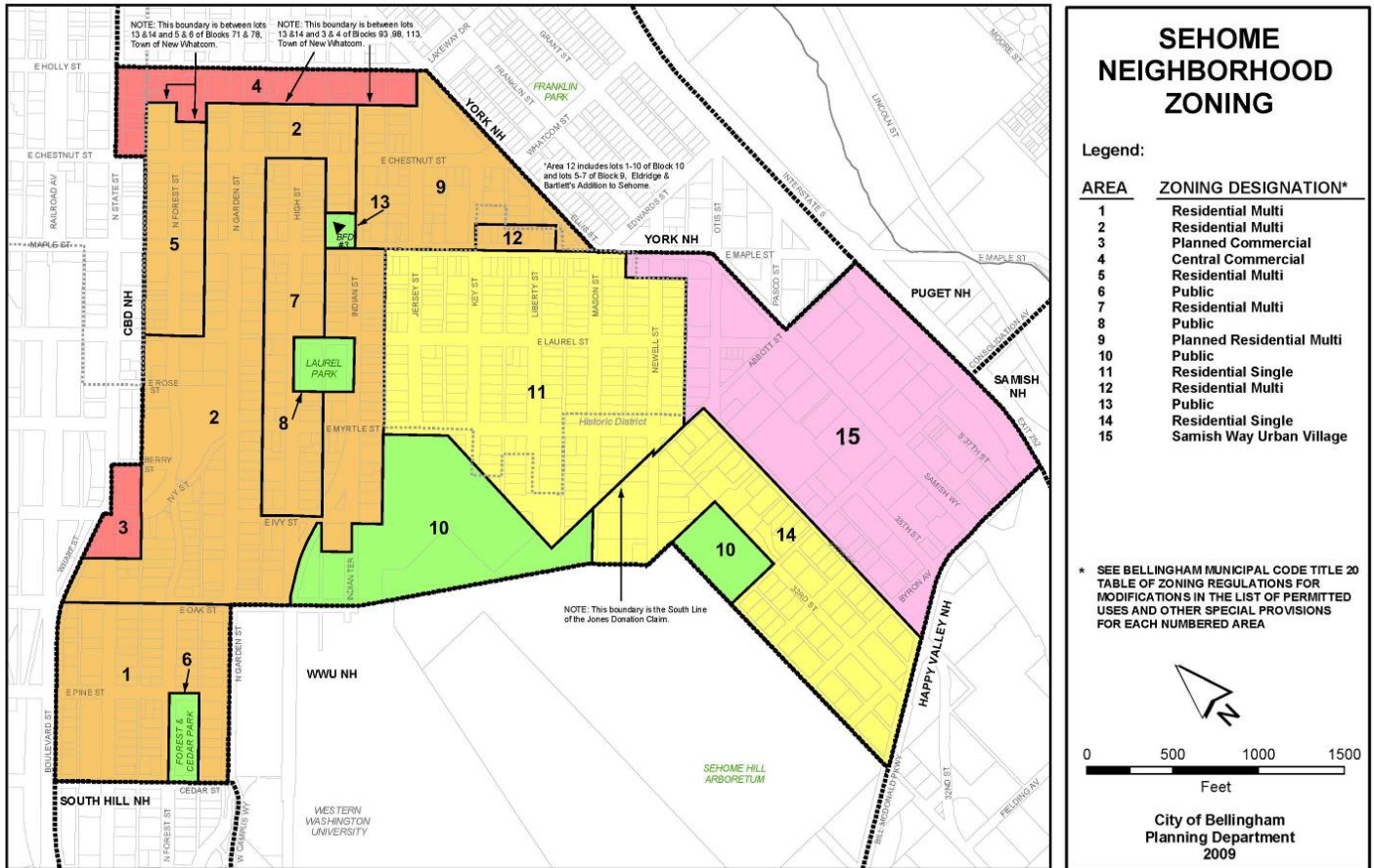
Sehome's west side has also undergone a metamorphosis. Increased awareness of the key elements of good architectural design and compatible additions to historic buildings has had a positive effect on the built environment, creating an inviting streetscape that is pedestrian-friendly and provides a pleasurable experience. Many property owners have rehabilitated their historic single-family homes and some have created new multi-family developments on Indian and High Streets. Others have built new apartment buildings in a form, scale and style that are compatible with the surrounding historic buildings.

Near the western-most edge of the neighborhood the 1910 National Guard Armory building has been adaptively reused and is a destination for residents, students and visitors. WWU's rehabilitation of the historically significant building has spurred reinvestment in the single-family homes along State, Garden, Forest and Ivy Streets. This part of the neighborhood has become a sought-after area that offers character homes, newer apartment units, dramatic views, proximity to water and parks, and is just a short distance to Bellingham's downtown.

Together, these areas – an Urban Village designed around the activities of the people who live here, a quiet hillside of homes from another era housing a mix of families and students, and an eclectic mix of past and future, business and high-density housing – comprise Sehome in 2030.

Chapter 2: Subarea Descriptions and Land Use Designations

The boundaries of the Sehome Neighborhood incorporate several distinct areas with characteristics influenced by the underlying zoning as well as the actual use of individual properties. Refer to the [Sehome Neighborhood Zoning Map](#), which delineates the boundaries of each of the areas described below. Actual densities are set in the [BMC 20.00.160 Sehome Neighborhood Table of Zoning Regulations](#), as are special conditions, prerequisite conditions and specific regulations.



Area 1

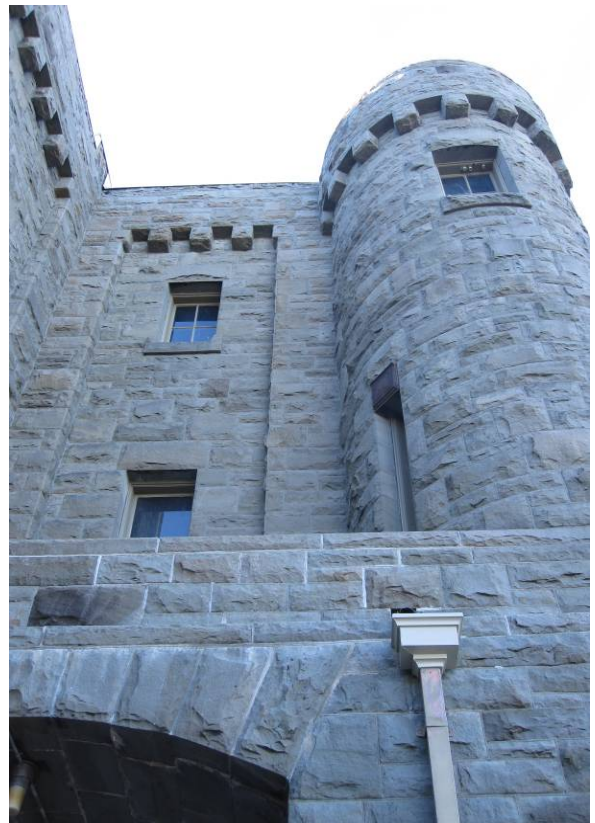
Area 1 is a relatively steep hillside area facing Bellingham Bay. The area is zoned multi-family but retains a number of single-family houses, many of which are historically significant. Several newer multi-family dwellings have been built along State Street and Boulevard, many of which were constructed under the guidance of the City’s Multi-family Design Guidelines.

The exceptional views of Bellingham Bay and convenient access to the Bay Trail, Western Washington University and the downtown core have attracted more investment and families into the area, and number of existing single-family dwellings have been restored or rehabilitated.

One of the most prominent structures in Area 1 is the Washington National Guard Armory. Built in 1910, the Armory is considered a significant historic feature of the neighborhood and an asset to the city and state. Like many armories of a similar era, the building was designed to appear as a castle with its heavy stone walls, rounded towers and massive doors. Currently owned by WWU, the building has been long-treasured by the neighborhood as well as the greater Bellingham community. After being decommissioned by the State, the building was used as a public roller-skating rink, and later by WWU as a warehouse and scene shop for the Theater Department. The building is currently undergoing stabilization with the goal of attracting a compatible new use. Preservation of this historic building is strongly encouraged by the neighborhood.



The east side of State Street a contiguous row of historically significant residential houses dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.



Detail of the tower on the northwest corner of the 1910 Washington National Guard Armory building.



View of Armory from Bellingham Bay.

AREA 1 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY

Area 2

Area 2 is zoned Residential Multi and includes Forest, Garden, High and Indian Streets running north and south, and Chestnut, Maple, Laurel, Myrtle, and Ivy Streets running east and west. The topography of Area 2 is characterized by relatively level benches broken by steep hillside areas. The slope of the terrain provides views over the southern end of downtown and the bay.

With proximity to WWU and its dramatic topographic setting and views, the area reflects its historical past and retains numerous significant residential, religious, community and commercial buildings. A number of the historic homes in the area have been converted into apartments, condos or used as rental housing. Many of these houses were built by city founders, industrialists and early business people, and these and other historically significant buildings and districts in the area may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The area has a mix of historic grand single-family and modest late-19th and early 20th century houses, interspersed with several substantial historic multi-family apartment buildings, as well as some post-modern multi-family structures that pre-date design review. Some of the neighborhood's oldest buildings are in this area, which contribute to the overall historical and architectural significance. Historic buildings in the area range from good to poor condition, as do many of the later developments dating from the 1950s through the 1990's. Since the adoption of the City's Multi-family Design Handbook, new multi-family buildings are required to meet specific design guidelines, which has improved the construction quality of area buildings.



The Morse House on Garden Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Originally built as a single-family residence, the building has been adaptively used over time as a bed and breakfast and as multi-family housing. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.



The historic Alamo Apartments on Maple Street and Garden Street. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

District 2 of the WWU Institutional Master Plan is located in the southeastern portion of Area 2 near the intersection of East Oak and High Streets. A WWU administrative support building (Alumni House) is currently located in this district. The Institutional Master Plan (IMP) includes a recommendation that a rezone of District 2 to Institutional should be evaluated when the Sehome Neighborhood Plan is updated in order to further support WWU Academic and Administrative services. The Sehome Neighborhood has not formally evaluated the rezone recommendation during the processing of the 2011 Neighborhood Plan update. It is anticipated that future discussions between the Sehome Neighborhood and WWU will need to occur prior to pursuing this recommendation with the City.

AREA 2 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY

Area 3

Area 3 is a small part of the Sehome Neighborhood on State Street and includes most of the area around the intersection of State, Boulevard and Ivy Streets. Area 3 has a land use qualifier of Commercial “Planned,” and is a generally level area, with steep hillside on its southern portion. Currently, the area is used primarily for commercial and semi-commercial purposes. It is similar to the adjacent areas of downtown in character, and is lightly developed as commercial space.

**AREA 3 LAND USE DESIGNATION:
COMMERCIAL**



Commercial building at corner of Forest and State Streets in Area 3. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Area 4

This is a long, narrow strip half a block wide along both State and Holly Streets. Existing uses are predominantly commercial, with several auto oriented commercial uses along both sides of these streets. Both streets are also major traffic corridors feeding into Bellingham's downtown core. Holly Street is a major arterial and connects the neighborhood directly to the downtown core, and over the years has become more pedestrian-friendly as a result of major streetscape improvements made by the City.

Holly Street has numerous historic buildings and new development is guided by the City Center Master Plan / Design Guidelines.



Holly Street near State Street intersection. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

AREA 4 LAND USE DESIGNATION: COMMERCIAL

Area 5

The two and a half square block area along Forest Street from Laurel Street north to Area 4 is a moderately sloping hillside facing Bellingham Bay. There are presently scattered offices—primarily medical and dental health care related uses— as well as several public buildings. These make up approximately 47% of the uses of the area. Approximately, 11% of the uses in the area are single-family residences and the remaining uses are multi-family residences. A number of structures of historical significance have been identified in this area.

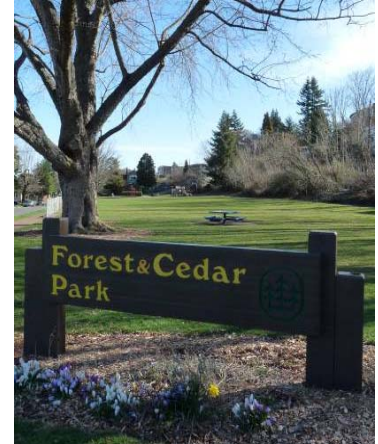
**AREA 5 LAND USE DESIGNATION:
MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY**



Insert image of Forest Street near Maple Street

Area 6

Area 6 consists of a developed neighborhood park known as Forest & Cedar Park. The park is approximately 2.0 acres in size and provides both active and passive recreational opportunities that include an open lawn area, a play area, a half court basketball court and a picnic area. Restroom facilities are available at this park site. The open lawn area is bordered to the east by a wooded bluff.



Forest and Cedar Park serves Sehome, WWU and South Hill Neighborhoods. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

AREA 6 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC

Area 7

Area 7 is four blocks long and one half block deep on either side of High Street. Extending between Chestnut to Ivy Street, Area 7 contains a mix of multi-family and single-family residences that range in size, age, and condition. There is a break in topography along the northern boundary of the area where several multi-family buildings have been constructed. High Street is 22 to 24 feet wide with on-street parking allowed on one side of the street. The 1100 block of High Street between Maple and Chestnut Streets was historically developed as single-family residences, although many houses are currently let as rentals.

The area has a mix of large single-family and modest late-19th and early 20th century houses, interspersed with several historic multi-family apartment buildings as well as some post-modern multi-family structures that pre-date design review. The slope of the terrain in this area provides views over the southern end of downtown and the bay, despite the heavily treed nature of much of the area. Close proximity to the WWU campus has resulted in many of the larger historic homes being converted to rental houses, apartments, and condominiums.



Old (brick building at left) and new (frame building at right) examples of multi-family housing in Area 7 along High Street. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Area 7 is zoned Residential-Multi and contains two land use qualifiers of Multiple and Planned. Under these use qualifiers, multi-family development occurring at a density at or under 2,000 square feet per unit is subject to Residential Multi Multiple development standards. Multi-family development occurring at a density greater than 2,000 square feet is subject to the Residential Planned development standards. The following should be addressed during the planned review process:

- Existing curb cuts should be closed when possible and alley access encouraged.
- Whenever an increase in the number of units is requested for an existing building, which does not presently provide adequate parking, additional parking should be required to meet full code requirements for the entire building.
- Given the ownership patterns, lot sizes, and design review standards, flexibility should be granted from the standard Planned Residential setbacks. This can be achieved by using Residential-Multi setback requirements.
- Building heights should be limited to 35 feet for height definition No. 1 and 20 feet for definition No. 2. While not eliminating potential negative impacts on view, this limitation should not further exacerbate the problem.

AREA 7 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY

Area 8

Area 8 consists of a developed neighborhood City Park known as Laurel Park. Bordered on three sides by Indian, High and Laurel Streets, the park is approximately 2.0 acres in size serves as a common open space and provides both active and passive recreational opportunities that include: an open lawn area, a playground, a half court basketball court, and a picnic area. There are no restroom facilities available at this park site.



Laurel Park. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

AREA 8 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC

Area 9

Area 9 is a relatively level area that includes PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center's South Campus, KVOS television station, several office/commercial uses and several single-family houses. Currently most of the area is owned by PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center. Chestnut Street bisects the area, and all other streets are fully developed narrow residential streets. A few houses in the area fall within the Sehome Hill Historic District boundaries.



View of historic St. Luke's building with newer St. Joseph Medical Center addition. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Area 9 includes several relatively contemporary multi-story office and professional buildings that are mainly located on the medical center campus, including the Chestnut Medical Center. Most consist of additions and remodels to the former St. Luke's Hospital, an historic multi-story brick building. Large expanses of surface parking are located on the campus and bordered by grassy areas. The parking lots are relatively unobtrusive due to partial screening with mature trees and shrubs. There is an open grassy area on the southwest side of the Chestnut Medical Center that is used by nearby residents as a "park."



One of two large surface parking lots in Area 9.

Access to commercial or multiple unit residential structures should, wherever possible, be consolidated and should not impact adjacent residential areas. Maple Street, especially, should have minimal direct access to development in this area, since it is narrow and serves as a sub-collector for the single family area (Area 11) to the southwest.

Area 9 borders the Sehome Hill Historic District along Maple Street. New development in Area 9 should include street front residential uses that are compatible in form, height, scale and style to the single-family historic houses south of Maple Street.

AREA 9 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY

Area 10

Area 10 is made up of the Sehome Hill Arboretum, a public arboretum with extensive natural wooded trails and is valued for its aesthetics and recreational opportunities. Owned by Western Washington University (WWU) and the City of Bellingham, the area consists of steep undeveloped land.

District 1 of the WWU Institutional Master Plan (IMP) is located in a portion of Area 10 of the Sehome Neighborhood between E. Oak and E. Ivy Streets. Portions of District 1 contain parking facilities that serve WWU north campus and are situated within two zoning classification consisting of Public and Residential-Multi. The IMP includes a recommendation that a rezone of District 1 to Institutional should be evaluated when the Sehome Neighborhood Plan is updated in order to allow a “mixed use” classification. The Sehome Neighborhood has not formally evaluated the rezone recommendation during the processing of this 2011 neighborhood plan update. It is anticipated that future discussions between the Sehome Neighborhood, the City, and WWU will need to occur prior to pursuing this recommendation.

The Sehome Arboretum contains a number of multi-use trails, which provide recreational opportunities as well as alternative commute options. The Jersey Street trail in particular is used by residents of Sehome and the rest of the city for hiking as well as commuting to Western Washington University. It is vital to the neighborhood that the undeveloped parts of this area outside of WWU District 1 remain undeveloped green space and a component of the Arboretum in perpetuity.



*One of the many trails through the Arboretum.
Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.*

AREA 10 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC

Area 11

Located on the northeasterly slope of Sehome Hill, Area 11 offers expansive views to the north and east over most of Bellingham and the surrounding foothills and mountains. Sehome Hill Arboretum abuts the area on the uphill side. The area is separated from high-density uses to the northwest by a sharp break in topography. The area is 95 percent single-family homes—mostly older, but in good condition. As an exception to other areas in the Sehome Neighborhood, the multi-family structures are generally newer buildings built as duplexes or apartments, prior to a change in zoning to single-family in the 1970s. A significant portion of Area 11 has been designated as the Sehome Hill National Register Historic District.



Historic houses in Area 11 contribute to the sense of place in the Sehome Hill National Historic District. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Many of the homes within Area 11 were built by Scandinavian millworkers between 1890 and 1930 and contribute to the Historic District. The area is popular for its close proximity to the Arboretum and downtown, and offers an array of well-kept historic homes ranging from large to modest in size. Bounded by the dramatic backdrop of the Sehome Hill Arboretum, the area conveys a strong sense of time and place.

A number of mature trees remain in the historic district but still allow many houses on the hillside to enjoy expansive city, mountain and bay views. Most properties have mature landscaping and are well maintained. Up the hill near the arboretum on Liberty, Mason and Newell Streets a few relatively newer houses were built between the 1940s and 1990s. These share the same lot size and much of the landscape character of the historic buildings and also benefit from direct access to the arboretum and have some of the most dramatic views available in the neighborhood.



View from intersection of Maple and Liberty Streets, with the Sehome Hill Arboretum in the background. Streets and right-of-way in Area 11 typically include generous landscape strips (measuring between 6' to 12' wide), with alley access to rear yards. Power and utility lines run overhead through the alleys.

The Sehome Hill National Historic District has concrete residential streets with curbs, gutters and sidewalks on streets running northeast and southwest. These improvements are absent on cross streets, which is viewed favorably by residents. Residential streets are narrow by current standards (18' to 24' wide). Parking on one side narrows the streets further and calms traffic. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

AREA 11 LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY

Area 12

Area 12 includes the lots on the north side of Maple Street between Key Street and Ellis Street, except for those lots that face Ellis Street. The single-family residences in this area still reflect the historic character of the neighborhood. Gradual zoning transitions lead to this stretch of Maple Street, buffering the more intensive office or multi-family uses to the north. This area is also considered the gateway to the pedestrian/bike-dominated route from the Samish Way Urban Village area to downtown Bellingham. All properties within Area 12 are included within the Sehome Hill National Historic District boundaries.



This duplex on Maple Street in Area 12 is one of the contributing historic buildings in the Sehome National Historic District. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

AREA 12 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, HIGH DENSITY

Area 13

Bellingham Fire Department Station No. 3 is located within this area. The Indian Street Station was built in the mid 1980's and was extensively remodeled in the mid-1990s. This station currently houses one engine company and a basic life support ambulance. The crews operating out of this station cover the largest first response territory in the City.

AREA 13 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC

Area 14

Area 14 is zoned residential with a density of four units per acre. Lots are relatively large, and many have mature trees that create a woodland-like overhead canopy. Tucked between the Samish Way Urban Village area and the quiet natural serenity of the Sehome Hill Arboretum, development in Area 14 predominantly consists of single-family residences, many of which are newer than those in other parts of the neighborhood.



Area 14 is distinguished as a relatively secluded, quiet and wooded area located between Samish Way Urban Village and the Sehome Hill Arboretum.

The steepest part of Sehome Hill forms the western boundary of Area 14, and contains shallow soils over the sedimentary bedrock. There are significant drainage problems in this area, and recent development on the steep slopes at the top of the area created drainage issues for neighbors below.

Area 14 is relatively quiet in nature due in part to limited vehicular access on residential streets. Few cross-street connections exist and many streets end at the foot of the Arboretum. Access is provided off Samish Way via Otis Street, Abbott Street, or Consolidation Avenue. Laurel Street also connects with Otis Street, providing a circuitous route out of the area on narrow residential streets. The majority of houses were built between the 1930s and the present, with a few built prior to 1930. Several more recent duplex developments at 34th and Abbott Streets and present a more “urban” character. Samish Way Urban Village is across 34th Street.

AREA 14 LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, LOW DENSITY

Area 15

Located in the northeastern portion of the Sehome Neighborhood, Area 15 contains a mix of commercial uses along Samish Way and a variety of residential units within the north / northwest portions of the area.

In 2009, the [Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan](#) was adopted to create urban vitality and to preserve neighborhood character by focusing growth into a concentrated area. The Samish Way Urban Village includes land within the Sehome and York Neighborhoods, with Area 15 being the Sehome Neighborhood portion. (See the [Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan](#) for details.)



Character of Samish Way in 2011.

The current character of this mixed commercial and residential “village” is largely defined by Samish Way, a major arterial serving not only the neighborhood but also the city as a gateway to WWU, downtown, the waterfront and to many other destinations outside of the area. Formerly Highway 99, the character of Samish Way is defined by the automobile-orientation of many businesses which include gas stations, hotels, restaurants and retail establishments of various style, condition and age. Approximately 67% of the area consists of surface parking lots and other impervious surfaces. The western and north / northwest sections of the area are primarily residential, with a mix of single-family homes and apartment buildings. Many of the residential cross streets do not have curb and gutter. Some landscaping is mature in the residential areas but trees are conspicuously absent along Samish Way. The Plan creates a vibrant mixed-use urban village that will enhance a sense of community by supporting the neighborhood’s walkability / bikeability and sustainability of local businesses while the large number of potential additional units of housing will help meet some of the density requirements for the rest of the city.

AREA 15 LAND USE DESIGNATION: URBAN VILLAGE

Chapter 3: Neighborhood Design

Design is a powerful tool that can enhance neighborhood character, create safe places for pedestrians, and draw people and activity to a place. The Sehome Neighborhood strongly supports building and site design that complements and enhances the surrounding neighborhood areas, especially in regard to building height, bulk and design.

Residential Design

The City of Bellingham currently has no single-family design review other than the standardized development regulations governing height, setback and massing. Style is not reviewed in single-family areas.

Over the last decade the City has adopted several design guidelines for multi-family development to augment existing zoning. *Zoning* restricts building height, bulk and setbacks, *design guidelines* and standards help new buildings blend in with their surroundings.

The City's [Multi-family Residential Design Handbook](#) was adopted in 2001 to influence and guide the design of multi-family and townhouse development of three or more units. The goal was to help new buildings blend in with and respect the character of surrounding buildings, and to maintain neighborhood quality, safety and stability, and to preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods' special qualities. A secondary goal of the Design Handbook was to encourage creativity in site planning and architecture, while building awareness of what constitutes good design – and to assist applicants in achieving these objectives.



Historic multi-family building on High Street.

Additional design guidance and review for residential multi-family areas was initiated with the [Infill Housing Toolkit](#). Adopted in 2009 with the purpose of establishing special development regulations for alternative housing forms, the Infill Housing Toolkit offers alternatives to the traditional multi-family dwelling unit design and encourages resourceful and creative development while maintaining the historic character of Bellingham's older neighborhoods. Other objectives of the Toolkit are efficient use of remaining developable land, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and the creation of more affordable housing opportunities.



Historic single-family house converted to condominiums on High Street near Laurel Park.



Multi-family construction under the City's [Multi-family Residential Design Handbook](#). Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Commercial and Mixed-use Design

Design guidelines and standards have also been created for commercial buildings. Design guidelines for the downtown core, as outlined in the [City Center Master Plan](#) and related [City Center Design Standards](#) (see [City Center Design Review District map](#) for affected area) were adopted by City Council in 2002. These guidelines, which affect a small portion of the Sehome Neighborhood (specifically along N. Forest Street between Holly and Ivy Streets, and along Holly Street between State and Ellis Streets) provide a basis for decisions regarding the appropriate treatment of existing buildings as well as for the design of compatible new construction.

In 2009 the adoption of the Sehome Neighborhood [Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan](#), related [Development Regulations](#) and [Urban Village Design Review](#), there are even more opportunities for commercial property owners to take advantage of design guidance provided by the City.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Goal ___: Significant historic resources in the neighborhood are identified, preserved, restored, rehabilitated and/or adaptively reused.

Policy: *Identify historic buildings, sites, objects, structures and districts that are eligible for the National, State and Local Historic Registers.*

Proposal: Initiate historic resource survey and inventory of properties not previously identified and nominate eligible buildings and districts to the National Register of Historic Places² (and the local historic register, if requested by the property owner).

Goal ___: Historic character of the neighborhood is preserved and enhanced, and the integrity of contributing buildings in the National Historic District areas is maintained and augmented.

Policy: *Property owners are encouraged to follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and to appropriately repair, restore and rehabilitate their properties.*

Policy: *New development in areas with well-defined context enhances the existing character of an area through compatible design and respect of the setting, form, scale, and historical styles of surrounding buildings.*

Policy: *Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings (e.g. church as a martial arts studio or multi-family housing).*

Policy: *Encourage infill that does not replace historic housing stock.*

Policy: *Property owners of historic buildings are encouraged to benefit from design review assistance for additions and alterations, and technical assistance regarding special tax valuation if listed on the Bellingham Local Historic Register.*



Many historic apartment buildings remain in the Sehome Neighborhood, like this example built in the early 20th century on Forest Street.

² NRHP designation is honorary and imposes no regulatory compliance from property owners.

Policy: Discourage demolition of historic housing to accommodate multi-unit development.

Policy: Encourage the creation and voluntary utilization of design guidelines to guide and encourage new development compatibility within historically significant areas

Goal___: Preserve, rehabilitate and adaptively re-use the 1910 National Guard Armory Building on Old State Street and Pine Street for purposes that are compatible with the surrounding residential area.

Proposal: The property owner will work with the Sehome Neighborhood Association and neighbors adjacent to the Armory Building to determine the best uses for the building, and support a redevelopment proposal that honors the architectural and historic significance of the building while adding value to the community.

Goal___: Both new construction and remodels in Sehome have minimal environmental impact.

Policy: Encourage the use of green building practices and LEED standards for multi-unit developments.

Goal___: All new development is of high quality design.

Policy: Encourage the replacement and/or renovation of older, non-historic multi-family and commercial buildings so they reflect or enhance neighborhood character through the use of pedestrian-friendly landscaping, well-defined and street-facing entrances, no blank walls, etc.

Policy: Architectural creativity is encouraged, if it is complementary to surrounding character.

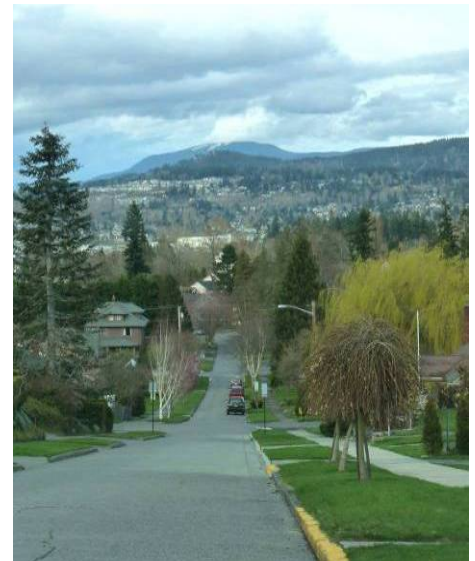
Policy: Development in Area 4 along State and Holly Streets should continue to reflect the City Center Master Plan where it faces downtown, while blending appropriately with the residential uses in Areas 2 and 5 to provide an effective transition between the areas without abrupt changes in character that negatively affect either area.

Goal___: Encourage the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of both public and private views outward to the water, mountains and foothills.

Policy: The neighborhood will work with the City to explore creative solutions to preserve views.



Two examples of compatible infill in Sehome: historic single-family house was adapted to contain several units (left) and new construction containing three condominium units (right).



Public views like this one down (Liberty Street) can be maintained by planting trees that frame but do not block views.

Chapter 4: Housing

The Sehome Neighborhood's appealing location within walking distance of the arboretum, WWU, downtown and the waterfront attracts a diverse mix of individuals and families.

The neighborhood has a variety of housing types, the majority of both single-family houses and multi-family units are located on landscaped, relatively narrow, hilly streets with alleys that help to create a greater sense of community as well as reduce the emphasis on automobiles. Typical lots are 55' x 125' (6,875 square feet) with rear driveways and garages generally accessed from an alley. The result is a high-quality streetscape composed of tight setbacks and reasonably wide sidewalks mostly uninterrupted by driveways. The combination of compact lots, narrow streets and relatively little undeveloped land makes Sehome a poor candidate for additional housing density beyond the current multi-family high density zoned levels except for two areas: Area 15 (Samish Way Urban Village) and possible future redevelopment of Area 9, now with medical office buildings owned by Peace Health, but zoned Residential Multi-Family "Planned."



Many large historic houses like this one on the corner of Garden and Chestnut Street have been adapted and now serve as multi-family housing. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Sehome is one of the most densely developed neighborhoods in the City and has a housing density of 12.5 units per acre. With the rezone of the *Samish Way Urban Village* (Area 15) in November 2009, the neighborhood now provides for a significant number of additional housing units, many times the number currently called for under the City's *Comprehensive Plan*. (The rezone of Area 15 created the potential for up to 1,291 new housing units and 612,250 square feet of commercial space.)

The majority of Sehome housing stock is over 50 years old. Most of the Sehome Neighborhood has been a "Target Area" under the federal Community Development Block Grant definitions, and since the late 1970s a total of 17 households in the neighborhood have received low- or no-interest Rehabilitation Loans for home repair, allowing low- and moderate-income individuals and families to remain in their houses and to preserve the existing aging -- and often historic -- housing stock.³

Historically, the neighborhood has welcomed individuals and families from a broad range of incomes, cultures and occupations, a tradition the neighborhood would like to continue.



The YWCA on Forest Street offers low-cost and free housing for women in crisis. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

³ The Neighborhood Design Chapter also identifies goals, policies and proposals to help preserve historic housing stock.

HOUSING GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Goal___: Affordable housing options will remain available in the Sehome Neighborhood.

Policy: *The neighborhood encourages the integration of new housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income families through private and public agency development projects.*

Policy: *Whenever possible, existing single-family historic housing stock should be protected.*

Goal___: A creative approach to future development on the parcels held by PeaceHealth / St. Joseph Medical Center are complementary to the style and scale of surrounding historic buildings.

Policy: Infill Housing Toolkit forms should be used in multi-family areas whenever possible to augment and / or complement existing housing, especially when directly adjacent to historic district areas.

Proposal: PeaceHealth / St. Joseph Medical Center will work with the neighborhood when they revisit their Institutional Master Plan (IMP) in 2012 to encourage compatible design, style and forms in the hospital annex campus parking lot development.

Goal___: Affordable multi-family housing is created in the Samish Way Urban Village area.

Policy: *Mixed-income residential development should be encouraged through the use of incentives and / or regulation.*

Chapter 5: Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Existing Parks and Natural Areas

Parks and Trails

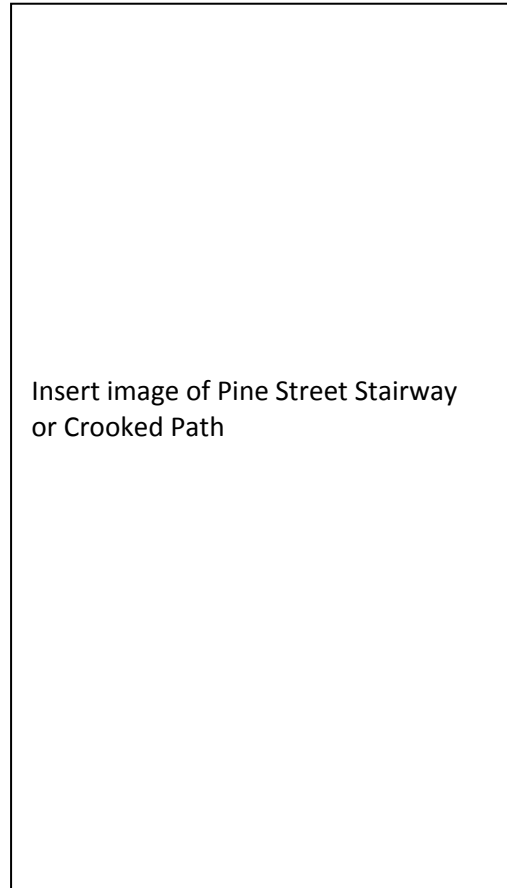
Two neighborhood parks are located in the Sehome Neighborhood, Laurel Park and Forest & Cedar Park. Both parks are approximately 2.0 acres in size and each provides active and passive recreational opportunities that include: an open lawn area, a playground, a half court basketball court, and a picnic area. These parks are frequently used by the Sehome Neighborhood and WWU students who toss Frisbees and play basketball or baseball. Forest & Cedar Park has a restroom building that is open on a seasonal basis and is well maintained; however, there are no public restroom facilities at Laurel Park.

The Crooked Path, a steep, winding trail that occupies the Laurel Street right-of-way between High and Garden Streets, provides a popular pedestrian route to the neighborhood from the downtown core. Part of the City’s trail system, the Crooked Path has been landscaped and is maintained by volunteers working with the Park Volunteer Program. Boulevard Park and the WWU campus provide additional well-used open space opportunities for Sehome residents.

Additional residential development will increase use of existing facilities as well as create a need for more parks and open space. The Samish Way Urban Village proposes to add significant numbers of residential infill units in an urbanized, multistory environment of multi-family housing. Open space is critical to an active public space experience in these environments, and should be required of developers as part of the development process.

Sehome Hill Arboretum/Area 10

Area 10 contains two separate open space tracts, which are part of the Sehome Hill Arboretum. The Arboretum provides natural hiking trails and viewpoint opportunities for the entire neighborhood. Area 10 is steep, heavily wooded, and include marked access to the Arboretum trail system at the top of Jersey Street, as well as unmarked access in several other locations.



Entrance to Arboretum trails from Myrtle Street.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Goal___: Existing parks and open space are maintained at or above their current level of maintenance and improvements are made as needed.

Proposal: The neighborhood recommends that the City consider renovating the turf at Forest & Cedar Park to be adequate for most uses.

Proposal: The City should provide an access point from Forest Street to Forest and Cedar Park at the north end of the retaining wall near the near the restroom.

Proposal: The neighborhood should work with WWU and the City to explore ways to mitigate HVAC noise at Forest & Cedar Park if it is determined to be an ongoing problem for neighbors in that area.

Proposal: The neighborhood will work with the City to explore the possibility of providing electricity and water for neighborhood events and activities in Laurel Park and Forest and Cedar Park.



Half-court basket ball court in Laurel Park.
Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

Goal___: Pedestrian access *via* parks and pathways through the neighborhood is enhanced.

Policy: *Pedestrian way-finding is enhanced on public trails and pathways.*

Proposal: Add a trail marker post or sign at Pine and North State to indicate it is a public pathway.

Proposal: Signage should be provided for the Crooked Path between High and Garden Streets and the pedestrian path on Laurel Street between Jersey and Indian Streets to encourage pedestrian access between the Sehome Neighborhood and the downtown core.

Proposal: The City and the neighborhood should retain use of unused city rights-of-way between the residential areas of Sehome and the Samish Way Urban Village for a bicycle/pedestrian-only access.

Goal___: Additional parks and open space should be added per the recommendations of the *Comprehensive Plan*. Smaller plaza type parks are recommended in conjunction with significant infill.

Policy: *The Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan includes open space and park plazas to encourage family investment in the residential component of the urban village.*

Policy: *If PeaceHealth / St. Joseph Medical Center’s expansive parking lots in Area 9 are developed to or near full zoned potential for infill, some open area should be required of the developer.*

Policy: *Portions of Area 10 that are outside the WWU Institutional Master Plan Districts 1 and 2 should remain as natural areas with management policies consistent with the Arboretum Master Plan.*

Chapter 6: Capital Facilities and Utilities

The City of Bellingham provides water, sewer, stormwater control, street maintenance, police, fire, medical response, emergency services, and litter control to Sehome and other neighborhoods within the City limits. The neighborhood is also served by private companies that provide electricity, natural gas, cable TV, satellite TV (via land lines and cable), cellular telephone, and sanitary services.

The Bellingham Fire Department Station No. 3 is located within Area 13 on the corner of Indian Street and Maple Street and is known as the Indian Street Fire Station. This station currently houses one engine company and a basic life support ambulance. The crews operating out of this station cover the largest first response territory in the City.

Drainage/Stormwater

The Sehome Neighborhood contains portions of three drainage areas with a varying degree of stormwater infrastructure that flows into Bellingham Bay. New development and improvements to existing drainage systems will need to meet current City of Bellingham and Department of Ecology standards for stormwater management to mitigate the effects of water run-off and water pollution.

Water/Sewer

Water and Sewer facilities are continually evaluated to ensure existing services are maintained and upgraded, and that future needs can be met to accommodate growth in Bellingham. As required by Washington State law, the City has adopted a comprehensive water and sewer plan, which manages the City's water and sewer systems. These plan provide a detailed list of projected public improvements necessary to provide and maintain existing and future service needs throughout the City. As a majority of the neighborhood has been developed, upgrades to existing facilities will need to meet adopted comprehensive plans and code requirements.

Public Buildings

Presently there are no Neighborhood Club/Activity Centers located within the Sehome Neighborhood to hold public meetings as well as other outreach or recreational opportunities. The neighborhood supports future possibility of locating a Neighborhood Club/Activity Center within the neighborhood.

CAPITAL FACILITIES GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Goal___: The Neighborhood should explore the possibility of locating a Neighborhood Club / Activity Center within the neighborhood.

Goal___: If possible, and if the qualities valuable to the neighborhood can be preserved in the process, utilities should be placed underground when new or redevelopment occurs within the Sehome Neighborhood.

Policy: *If and / or when Area 9 is re-developed, utilities should be placed underground.*

Chapter 7: Transportation and Circulation

The centrally located Sehome Neighborhood contains many of the City's main arterial streets, as well as several mass transit and truck routes. The five "principal" arterial streets in Sehome include Samish Way / East Maple / Ellis Streets; Boulevard / State Street; and East Holly, Chestnut and Forest Streets. Bill McDonald Parkway and Garden Street are both considered "secondary" arterials, and Indian Street is considered a "collector" arterial. All these streets are heavily used by through traffic. Holly Street (Lakeway) connects to I-5 and east-lying neighborhoods. Samish Way feeds four lanes of traffic to and from the south, including traffic from a southern I-5 off ramp. To effectively route these large traffic volumes two one-way couplets were created: Chestnut and Holly Streets running east and west, and State and Forest Streets running north and south. The Ellis Street / Samish Way (and a two-block section of E. Maple Street) corridor remains a primary arterial with four lanes of two-way traffic.

Most Sehome arterials have mass transit bus service, and some are "high-frequency" service routes.⁴ WWU is located directly adjacent to Sehome at the southern border of the neighborhood, and most northerly commuter traffic to and from the university passes through Sehome *via* Garden and Indian Streets.

Due to the proximity of the university and the downtown district, Sehome has a high volume of bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Except for northbound Forest and part of southbound Indian streets, bicycle and pedestrian traffic share arterial routes with car, transit and truck traffic. Another factor contributing to traffic volume is that many of the historic houses retain their single-family form but have been converted to rental housing or divided into apartments in addition to newer multi-family units.



Commuters wait for WTA bus on Indian Street.

The purpose of arterials is to keep larger volumes of vehicle traffic flowing steadily through the city and away from the neighborhood, where possible. It is essential for the continued transit "health" of both the neighborhood and the City that Sehome's arterial streets continue to accommodate expected increases in all modes of traffic, minimize traffic congestion and vehicle-pedestrian conflicts, and maintain performance of WTA's public transit system. Increases in traffic through Sehome are expected over the next 20 – 50 years as the downtown and waterfront areas are developed.⁵

In addition to the numerous arterials, the neighborhood has an existing grid of well-connected residential streets, defined as low-speed (25 mph or less), low-volume streets that provide direct local access within neighborhoods, with pedestrian and bicycle safety a main priority. Laid out in small blocks, Sehome's residential streets are characteristically narrow with sidewalks, curb and gutter, and some have expansive planting strips between sidewalks and the street. A number of streets have never been improved with sidewalks, curb and gutter and convey a more rural feeling that is valued by many residents.

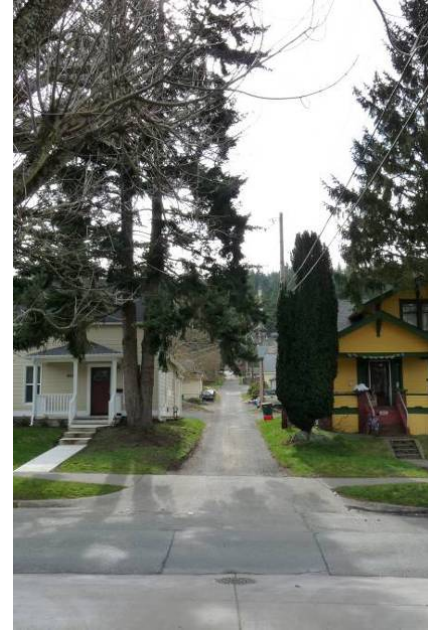
⁴ All arterial streets serve City Fire and Emergency Response vehicles.

⁵ The downtown core is targeted for up to 1,321 housing units (per the City of Bellingham Land Supply Analysis) and the waterfront district is targeted to accept another 1,893 housing units (2010 Waterfront FEIS)

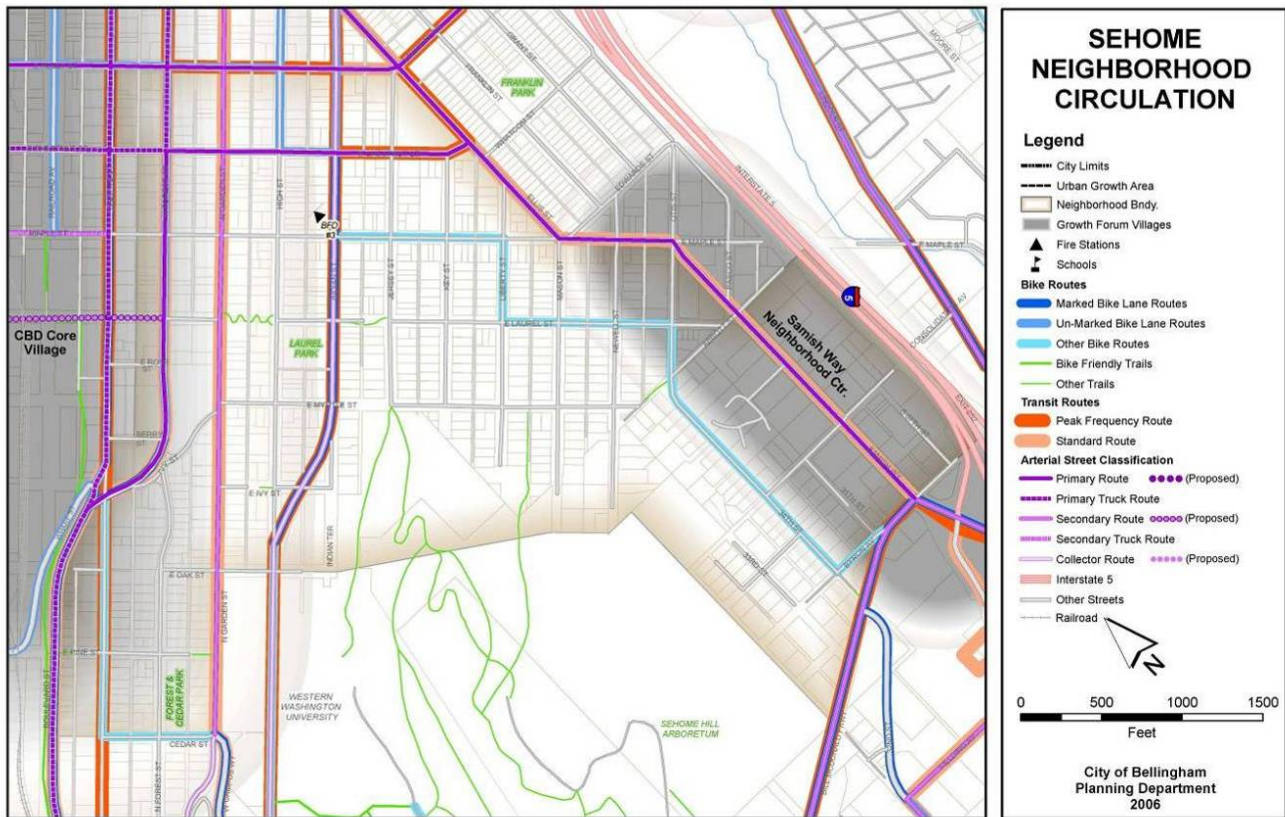
The nature of some low-traffic residential streets optimizes them as potential “Bicycle Boulevards,” to connect with marked bicycle lanes and popular destinations or activity centers. Bicycle Boulevards can be designed to allow free flow travel for bicyclists by orienting stop signs to keep bicyclists moving, while also discouraging cut-through motor vehicle traffic by creating traffic islands, chicanes and diverters. Other key components of the bike boulevard concept can include traffic signals (either existing, or added where warranted) and median islands to help bicyclists cross busy streets. Bicycle Boulevards are a relatively new method for enhancing residential streets for the comfort bicyclists and pedestrians without precluding the use of the street by vehicles.⁶

Most residential streets in the neighborhood are serviced by alleys. Historically designed to provide private access for residential and business utility areas, the added benefits of Sehome’s alleyways are that narrow lane widths and infrequent, slow-moving traffic provide a more intimate and quiet pedestrian experience and build community by creating informal “neighboring” opportunities. In addition to alleys Sehome has a few unimproved rights-of-way that have been developed as formal and / or informal pedestrian trails.

Overall, improvements to the existing auto, bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks throughout would add to the distinctive character of the Sehome Neighborhood.



Alleyways throughout the neighborhood provide alternate routes of travel for bicycles and pedestrians. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.



⁶ Residential streets proposed as Bicycle Boulevards must first be studied to ensure that the street is the best candidate for improvement and then designed carefully to accommodate all users and residents.

There is also a northbound bicycle lane along Boulevard, which currently ends at the complex dual intersections of Boulevard / Wharf / N. State and Boulevard / Forest Streets, without a crossing to the Boulevard South Bay Trail. The City intends to construct a new Wharf Street multimodal roundabout to replace these difficult dual intersections. This project is adopted in the 2012-2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) but requires an estimated \$3.2 million in funding, currently unavailable. This will tie the Boulevard bike lane to the Forest Street bike lane, as well as the South Bay Trail by providing safer crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.



Aerial view of existing dual Intersections at Boulevard, Wharf, State and Ivy Streets.



Forest Street is a principal arterial in the Sehome Neighborhood, and has designated bicycle lanes along the south side of Forest Street between Ivy and York Streets. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

In 2009, the City reduced Forest Street traffic lanes to two (from three) and added a bicycle lane, as well as complete sidewalks, curb bulb-outs, and marked crosswalks at every intersection. Although Sehome currently has few established pedestrian and bicycle pathways separated from car traffic, the proximity of the university and the downtown core has increased the number of pedestrian and bicycle commuters, primarily along Forest, Garden, High, Indian, Jersey, 34th, Myrtle, Laurel, Maple, Chestnut, and Holly Streets. Building upon current use, the neighborhood encourages an increase in non-

motorized transportation routes through its streets in order to preserve the historic character of the neighborhood, reduce noise and air pollution and relieve some of the burden on the greater Bellingham community from busy car traffic.⁷

⁷ Bellingham Public Works has applied for WSDOT grant funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Indian Street between Chestnut and Oak Street and along N. Samish Way at the intersections of Abbott Street and Consolidation Avenue. Notification is expected in June 2011 and, if WSDOT grant funding is awarded, bicycle and pedestrian improvements in these locations could occur in 2012.

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION GOALS, POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The Sehome Neighborhood vision for transportation and circulation improvements are focused on three general Goals:

- 1) Increase safety for non-motorized transportation modes (bicycle and pedestrian) and increase the utilization of routes by connecting existing gaps.
- 2) Maintain and enhance pedestrian, bike and environmentally-friendly streetscapes and preserve neighborhood character, and
- 3) Creatively address neighborhood parking needs.

These Goals are supported by related Policies, and by specific Proposals as outlined below.

Goal___: Increase safety for non-motorized transportation modes (bicycle and pedestrian) and increase the utilization of routes by connecting existing gaps.

Sehome’s close proximity to numerous destinations such as downtown, the waterfront, parks, trails and schools creates many opportunities for alternate modes of transportation. The high population density and proximity to WWU and downtown puts Sehome in an excellent position to encourage increased pedestrian and bicycle use by providing cross-town pathways and connections through the neighborhood to points beyond.

A major goal of the neighborhood is to build upon the existing non-motorized mobility options by improving the safety and usability of these transportation routes. Main safety issues concern the interaction between motorized vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Safety issues concerning speed on residential streets used by through-traffic are also of major concern.

Policy: *Create alternative transportation routes that complete neighborhood bike and pedestrian networks and connect with other community routes.*

Policy: *Encourage pedestrian use and safety through the neighborhood and to key destinations beyond.*

Policy: *Examine the usability and safety of current pedestrian and bike routes, and the identification of sites where additional cross-neighborhood pedestrian routes are needed.⁸*

Policy: *Where warranted, install marked crosswalks and, where possible, install designated (striped) bicycle lanes on arterial streets.*

Policy: *Use a variety of techniques to increase traffic-related safety on arterial streets, where possible.*

Policy: *Employ methods to discourage speeding and cut-through auto traffic on neighborhood residential streets, such as physical traffic-calming measures, where warranted³.*

Proposal: The Sehome Neighborhood and the City should jointly study the application of Bicycle Boulevards or Sharrows and other traffic calming measures as a coordinated plan for the Sehome Neighborhood and establish a timeline or priority list for application.

⁸ Within the context of this document “Pedestrian Route” refers to those routes preferred and often used by pedestrians. The term “route” refers generally to the sidewalks, streets, trails and unimproved rights-of-way habitually used by pedestrians.

LAUREL STREET

Proposal: Create a designated pedestrian route between State and Abbott Streets to connect the Samish Way Urban Village to downtown *via* a pedestrian-friendly route through the Sehome Hill Historic District down the Crooked Path and make connections north and south at the South Bay Trail.

Proposal: Improve safety signage, where warranted, to notify the presence of pedestrians at the Crooked Path walkway at Garden Street.

Proposal: Add way-finding signage on Jersey Street to inform pedestrians of arboretum trailheads at top of street.

Proposal: Improve pedestrian access in front of the gravel parking strip between High and Indian Streets at Laurel Park. The neighborhood will work with Public Works and / or Parks to study the feasibility of adding a sidewalk or a walking path at Laurel Park between grass and parked cars.

Proposal: Improve lighting along the heavily treed path on Laurel Street between Indian and Jersey Streets to increase safety and visibility at night.

GARDEN STREET

Garden Street is a secondary arterial connecting commuters to WWU and is a primary transportation route for residents of the Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods, with a volume of 7,100 vehicles per day.⁹ Garden Street also has a high volume of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and though it has been widened in the past it retains a fairly narrow profile, accommodating transit bus traffic and parallel parking on one side of the street. While the roadbed generally accommodates the varied mix of transportation modes, some drivers travel at speeds over the posted 25 mph limit causing safety concerns for pedestrians, bicyclists and other vehicles. Of particular concern is the section between Holly and Oak Streets.

Policy: *Improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety on Garden Street between Holly and Oak Streets.*

Policy: *Improve pedestrian safety and visibility at commonly-used crossings that connect to WWU and downtown routes, such as the south corner of Laurel Street at the Crooked Path / Laurel Pedestrian Route, and the potential Maple Street Bicycle Boulevard.*

Proposal: The neighborhood will work with adjacent property owners and Public Works to investigate the feasibility of planting street trees in the landscaping strip along Garden Street as a traffic-calming measure.

Proposal: The neighborhood will work with Bellingham Public Works staff, WWU and the Campus Community Coalition to physically improve shared pedestrian crossings and raise awareness of speeding hazards.

Proposal: The neighborhood will work with the Police Department to investigate ways to enforce compliance with 25 mph on Garden Street.

⁹ According to 2010 traffic counts.

INDIAN STREET

Policy: Increase visibility, safety and use of the Indian Street bicycle route between the York Neighborhood and WWU.¹⁰

Policy: Increase awareness and safety in areas where multi-modal road use is currently occurring, but not marked.

Policy: Enhance the main bicycle route to WWU by improving conditions of and connections with the citywide bicycle route network.

Proposal: Repair the roadbed of the Indian Street Bicycle lane.¹¹

Proposal: Investigate the feasibility of adding a marked “shared lane” designation along Indian Street between Magnolia and Oak Streets to fill gaps between designated (striped) bicycle lanes and unmarked “shared-use” streets.¹²

Proposal: Add safety signage and on-street markings for bicycles, pedestrians, and drivers at the Oak Street intersection of High and Indian Streets where visibility of merging bike and car traffic is poor.



The Sehome Neighborhood has designated bicycle lanes located along the west side of Indian Street from Chestnut to High Street and ending at Oak Street on the north edge of the WWU campus. Photo courtesy Joy Keenan.

MAPLE STREET

Policy: Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety at marked crosswalks at Maple at Garden Street.

Proposal: Explore the feasibility of creating an east-west Maple Street Bicycle Boulevard between Forest Street and Samish Way. Indicate that the roadway includes alternative traffic, adding appropriate safety measures and signage, which may include striping or symbols, painted on roadbed or posted signage, reduced speed limits. Put in place physical traffic calming devices to slow vehicle traffic and reduce non-local cut-through traffic.

Proposal: Post Warning/Steep Downgrade along north side of Maple Street between High and State Streets.

¹⁰ Bellingham Public Works has applied for WSDOT grant funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Indian Street between Chestnut and Oak Street. Notification is expected in June 2011 and, if WSDOT grant funding is awarded, bicycle and pedestrian improvements in these locations could occur in 2012.

¹¹ Bellingham Public Works has applied for WSDOT grant funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Indian Street between Chestnut and Oak Street. The local matching funds for this project include \$285,000 in street overlay for Indian Street. Notification is expected in June 2011 and, if WSDOT grant funding is awarded, bicycle and pedestrian improvements in these locations could occur in 2012.

¹² Due to narrow street width, parking on both sides of the street in some sections and frequent buses along this route, it is not practical to add a designated bike lane in all areas of Indian Street. In some sections bicycles must share the road with vehicles (i.e. the two blocks between Magnolia and Chestnut Streets). Sections between the designated bicycle lanes are not marked and not obvious to riders unfamiliar with the area. Bellingham Public Works has applied for WSDOT grant funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Indian Street between Chestnut and Oak Streets and if grant funding is awarded, bicycle and pedestrian improvements could occur in 2012.

Proposal: Post safety signage such as Warning/Bikes on Road or Bike/Speed Zone signs, if appropriate and warranted, at approaches to intersections at Maple Street close to Samish Way (such as Jersey, Key, and Liberty Streets).

Proposal: The Sehome Neighborhood and Bellingham Public Works will work together regarding the possibility of installing raised striping, or other appropriate methods, to calm traffic on Maple Street near the High, Jersey, Key and Liberty Street intersections.

34th STREET

34th Street provides a major pedestrian/bicycle corridor to Bill McDonald Parkway, Sehome High School, Sehome Village and other neighborhoods from the rest of The Sehome Neighborhood. Residents prefer to maintain the rural feeling of the street and allow bicycles, pedestrians, and cars to share the roadbed. Future development may make improvements to the street necessary, such as adding sidewalks. (See also the Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan).

Policy: *Develop and implement methods to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety along 34th Street.*

Policy: *The City will collaborate with property owners and neighbors along 34th Street in discussions and decisions regarding future changes, improvements and developments of*

Policy: *Improve safety for pedestrians to cross Bill McDonald Parkway for access to Sehome Village, Sehome High School, and other neighborhoods.*



Bicyclist on 34th Street. Photo courtesy Dave Cole.

Proposal: Develop safe bicycle access from/to 34th St. to/from Bill McDonald Parkway, and explore the feasibility of creating a north-south 34th Street Bicycle Boulevard..

Proposal: Create a safe pedestrian crossing on Bill McDonald Parkway near the Byron Street pedestrian path/stairs.

Proposal: Install signage that indicates that bicycles can go both directions on Byron Street.

MYRTLE STREET

Policy: Encourage the preservation of the character of Myrtle Street, a popular pedestrian route and connector to the arboretum paths and ensure that cars, bicycles and pedestrian traffic can equally share the roadway. Currently, a gravel footpath connects Myrtle to Otis Street and is used by residents of Area 11 to access 34th Street and Samish Way.

Policy: Preservation of landscape improvements and narrow roadway of Myrtle Street is encouraged.

Proposal: Investigate designation of Myrtle Street as a pedestrian route between High and Newell Streets and on to Abbott and 34th Streets.

Proposal: Improve and maintain the footpath between Myrtle and Otis Streets to ensure that it remains open for foot traffic.

PINE STREET PATH

The Pine Street Stairway connects Garden Street to the South Bay Trail, a popular path for WWU students and residents to access the Interurban Trail along Boulevard. The path can be quite difficult to follow unless pedestrians are already quite familiar with the routes and stairways, especially in the winter or at night. In places the path is dark and foliage is dense.

Policy: Connect pedestrian routes with other neighborhoods and east-west routes.

Proposal: Improve pedestrian safety and use of the Pine Street Pedestrian / South Bay Trail by illuminating the pathway, improving crosswalks and marking the route with way-finding signage.¹³

Proposal: Add lighting along the Pine Street wooded path connecting Garden Street to Cedar Park to improve safety and visibility at night. This may be a collaborative effort among various City departments.

Proposal: Add a trail marker post or sign at Pine and State Streets, as there is no indication that this is a public pathway between the posts at the far (east) side of park and the stairs at the alley behind the Armory.

Proposal: If warranted, add a pedestrian crossing at Pine and State Streets, north corner, using whatever means street and traffic regulations allow. Note: A crosswalk at Pine/Boulevard will be installed in 2011.

¹³ A flashing crosswalk at Pine/Boulevard has been proposed and may be installed in 2012.

SAMISH WAY

Policy: Auto, bicycle and pedestrian safety along N. Samish Way is improved in accordance with the Samish Way Urban Village Master Plan and the City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.¹⁴

Proposal: As feasible, provide crosswalks across Samish Way.¹⁵

Goal___: Maintain and enhance pedestrian, bike and environmentally friendly streetscapes and preserve neighborhood character.

Policy: Preserve the historic character of Sehome’s narrow, pedestrian-friendly residential streets

Policy: Maintain heritage trees and landscape improvements when making changes to transportation networks.

Policy: Preserve landscape improvements along residential and arterial streets, and preserve site-views and greenway paths that provide through-traffic a sense of connection to the neighborhood, which could have the effect of visually narrowing the corridor and influencing drivers to obey the posted speed limit.

Policy: The neighborhood encourages improving stormwater runoff between Mason and Otis Streets on Laurel Street, which may include adding low-impact bio-retention, bio-filter, natural drainage swales, rain gardens, adding other natural street runoff filtering systems or by creating a “Street Edge Alternative (“SEA”) street.

Proposal: The Parks Department will work with the neighborhood to improve plantings along the pathway at the west entrance in the alley between Indian and Jersey, and at the Crooked Path approach between Forest and Garden Streets.

Goal___: Creatively address neighborhood parking needs.

Policy: As needed, the neighborhood will consider the implementation of creative parking solutions such as the Sehome Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) Program.

Policy: New and re-developed multi-family housing and commercial developments should be required by the City to provide adequate on-site parking.

Policy: The City should maintain the RPZs existing in 2011 and the agreement with WWU to support them. Additional zones should be considered as needed.

Policy: The City and WWU should work together to further reduce the number of vehicles coming through the neighborhood to access the campus. Two successful projects are the Lincoln Street Park and Ride Lot and the WWU Viking Xpress Bus Pass.

¹⁴ Policies and proposals specific to Area 15 are addressed in depth in the Samish Way Urban Village Subarea Plan

¹⁵ The City has applied for a bicycle-pedestrian safety grant to install enhanced pedestrian crossings with center median refuges at Samish Way at Abbott Street and Samish Way at Consolidation Avenue, both to include the beginnings of a planted center median that would eventually run the length of North Samish Way. Public Works added this project to the 2011-2016 TIP (contingent on grant funds). If grant funding is awarded, construction of these two enhanced pedestrian crossings could occur in 2012.