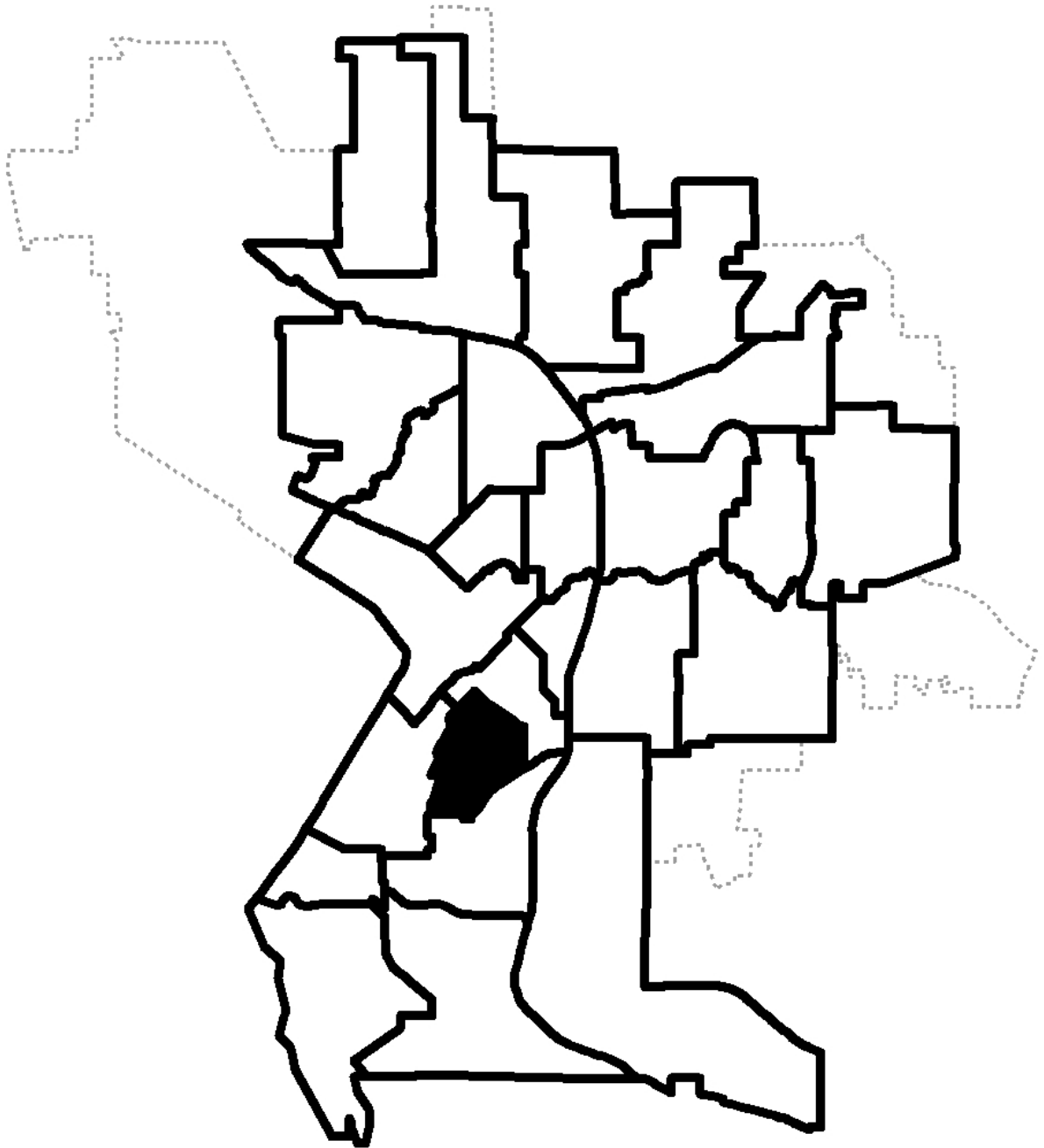




# City of Bellingham Neighborhood Plan **WWU**



## WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

### PREFACE

Subsequent to the adoption of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan in January 1996, the city began a process to update the 23 neighborhood plans. This Western Washington University Neighborhood Plan is adopted as a subarea component of the comprehensive plan, in accordance with the State Growth Management Act. The purpose of this plan is to clarify and strengthen relationships between the City, the University and the surrounding neighborhoods with respect to planning for future growth and development within the Western Washington University neighborhood.

***It is also the intent of this plan to identify issues and provide a foundation for eventual adoption by the city and WWU of an institutional master plan (IMP) in accordance with BMC 20.40. As such, this plan contains text and a number of recommendations that are to be implemented by specific requirements in the subsequent IMP. The recommendations are numbered and shown in bold italics print.***

The IMP will provide specifics with respect to appropriate land uses, parking requirements, infrastructure improvements, building height, setbacks, buffering and landscaping requirements and other standards deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission and City Council during the development of the IMP.

### SECTION I. NEIGHBORHOOD/CAMPUS CHARACTER

#### I-1 Introduction

The Western Washington University Neighborhood includes the campus of Western Washington University, one of six state-funded, four-year institutions of higher education. Since its beginning in 1893, WWU has grown into a comprehensive university of approximately 11,470 (10,200 Full Time Equilivant) students according to 1997 fall enrollment figures, making it the third largest in enrollment in the state behind only the University of Washington and Washington State University. Considered by many to have one of the most beautiful campuses in the U.S., WWU is home to unique environmental and economic research programs, award-winning experimental vehicle design, and highly regarded manufacturing, plastics, and electrical engineering technology programs.

WWU is the county's largest single employer, with nearly 1,500 employees. Western provided over \$150 million in income and \$50 million in retail sales to the local economy in 1996, according to Professor David Merrifield of the University's Center for Economic and Business Research. The indirect or multiplier effects of university and student expenditures result in approximately \$69 million in additional earned income for other county residents over time. Examples of these spin-off impacts include over \$7 million

in income to those in the wholesale/retail trade sectors, \$14 million to construction income, and \$48 million to other sectors of the economy. These figures do not reflect the benefits of spending by visitors to WWU.

Citizens of Bellingham enjoy access to Western's facilities and open space, including its acclaimed outdoor sculpture as well as popular offerings in theater, music and sports. In many respects, the University has been and continues to be a very important asset for the region.

## I-2 History

The Western Washington University Neighborhood was created in the late 1970s as one of the 22 neighborhoods that made up the 1980 *Bellingham Plan*. The first WWU Neighborhood Plan contained a summary of City/University planning activities, and a brief circulation section that identified 21st Street as a secondary arterial connecting College Parkway (now Bill McDonald Parkway) to Valley Parkway (now Old Fairhaven Parkway) and identified the University's intent to seek vacation of the 21st Street right-of-way north of the parkway. The plan established four land use subareas, including Institutional zoning for the main campus area, Public zoning for a University-owned housing area along Bill McDonald Parkway, Public zoning for the Sehome Hill Arboretum, and Planned Residential, Mixed, zoning for three privately owned parcels along 21st Street. The plan recommended that the 1974 WWU Facilities Development Plan (FDP) be updated and approved by the University and submitted to the city and that the updated FDP become the master plan for campus development. Both the 1981 Updated Facilities Development Plan and the 1987 South Campus Master Plan were submitted to the city, however the city has not formally reviewed or adopted any of WWU's plans since the 1974 FDP.

## I-3 Land Use

The main campus area contains 195 acres, including 38 acres in the Sehome Hill Arboretum. This leaves 157 acres available for academic and other education facilities. The main campus includes 42 academic and support buildings and ten residential housing and food service complexes, dating from 1896 (Old Main) to 1996 (Science, Math, & Technology Education Facility). These buildings provide a total of approximately 2,755,000 gross square feet of academic, support services, housing and recreation areas. Campus housing facilities (North Campus, Ridgeway, and South Campus) provide housing for approximately 3,650 students. Buildings and other hard surfaces (parking, roads, walkways) take up approximately 65 acres. The remaining areas are generally open spaces with 23 acres classified as usable open space. Current paved and gravel parking areas contain spaces for approximately 3,400 vehicles.

## **SECTION II. CITY/UNIVERSITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

### II-1 Western Washington University

As a state institution of higher education, WWU was established by, and is subject to the control of, the state government acting by and through the state Legislature, the

Governor, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the University's Board of Trustees, among others. Title 28B RCW (and other statutes) set forth the basic organizational structure, powers, and responsibilities of the various state governing entities with regard to higher education. As a result of amendments made to the 1990 Growth Management Act in 1991, like other state agencies, WWU is also required to comply with local comprehensive plans and development regulations.

The principal responsibility of a state institution of higher education, such as WWU, is to provide higher education to students as mandated by state requirements. Due to the state's increasing population and burgeoning demand for higher education, the state has determined that all state universities shall plan for increasing enrollments in the near future. Approximately 84,000 additional students are expected to enter the state's higher education system by the year 2010. The number of applications to WWU has been increasing. Pursuant to the state's direction and in response to the increasing number of applications, the WWU Board of Trustees has determined that WWU shall increase its enrollment from the current enrollment of approximately 10,200 FTE students to about 12,500 FTE students by approximately the year 2010. Accordingly, the University is conducting planning activities to determine the best ways to accommodate this increasing enrollment.

The University has undertaken a number of planning activities since its inception in 1896. These activities include: the first landscaping plan approved by the Board of Trustees in 1908; the BEBB and Gould Plan (1924-31); the Thiry Plan (1957-63); the 701 Study (1964); the Central Campus Development Plan (1964-68); the South Campus Academic Area Plan (1968); the Facilities Development Plan (1974); the Updated Facilities Development Plan (1981); and the South Campus Master Plan (1987). For a complete history of campus planning activities, see the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan.

In 1990, the University began the process to produce what would become the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan. This plan includes a summary of campus development and planning activities, and recommendations for future campus development. The plan is based on the direction set by the Board of Trustees to add an additional 250 FTE students per year, of which 150 would be on-campus enrollments. The plan has sections dealing with issues in the area of land use, landscaping, transportation and access, parking, public safety and campus infrastructure. The stated purpose and intent of Western's plan is:

"Because of the University's rapidly changing surroundings and anticipated growth as an institution, a comprehensive facilities master plan is not only a valuable planning tool but an essential vehicle to thoughtful and organized development of the Western Washington University Campus. Its function is to illustrate a visual concept for planned growth of the physical facilities of Western while taking into consideration both the Strategic Plan and the capital funding request processes. The master plan should respond to existing concerns, identify future facility site locations and propose a scheme for organized facilities growth in order to continue the University's commitment to quality education."

## II-2 City of Bellingham

The first documented cooperative planning effort between WWU and the city was the 701 Study in 1964. The University and the city implemented many of the recommendations from this comprehensive land use and traffic circulation plan.

Western's 1974 Facilities Development Plan (FDP) was adopted by the city and provided the basis for campus development during the 1970's and 1980s. In 1980, the city adopted the Western Washington University Neighborhood Plan, referencing Western's 1974 FDP as the master planning document guiding campus development. The 1980 WWU Neighborhood Plan also recommended that the FDP be updated and submitted to the city for review. Although the Updated Facilities Development Plan was submitted in 1981, the city has not formally reviewed or adopted any of Western's plans subsequent to the 1974 FDP.

The update of the WWU Neighborhood Plan began in February, 1997. The Bellingham Planning Commission throughout the year held a series of eleven work sessions and hearings. Prior to and during this time staff from WWU also held a series of cottage meetings to inform interested citizens about the University's Campus Master Plan. In November 1997, the Planning Commission recommended a draft neighborhood plan for approval and the City Council began reviewing the Commission's recommendations early in 1998. The plan was approved by the City Council in September 1998. Subsequent to the adoption of this neighborhood plan, the City and the University initiated development of an Institutional Master Plan as specified under BMC 20.40. The joint Institutional Master Plan will guide city review of campus development over the next several years. See Section VII for more discussion of the institutional master planning process.

## **SECTION III. CITY/UNIVERSITY/NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONSHIPS**

### III-1 Issues

The City of Bellingham and Western Washington University have enjoyed a cooperative relationship over the years. Like many cities with large state institutions, the city of Bellingham adopted a somewhat "hands-off" approach in dealing with campus development issues in the past. This is due in large part to the fact that state agencies in Washington have historically been exempt from local land use plans and regulations. In 1991, the Growth Management Act was amended to require that state agencies comply with local comprehensive plans and development regulations adopted pursuant to the Act. As a result, the city in 1998 repealed the section of the Land Use Development Ordinance that exempted state agencies from complying with local land use regulations.

The Western Washington University campus is located among the Happy Valley, Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods. Campus activities have an impact on surrounding neighborhoods while providing benefits to the entire community. Residents of the areas adjacent to the campus have easy access to educational programs and

cultural activities and other events offered by the University. These same residents are subject to increased traffic on local residential streets, parking on residential streets by WWU students, faculty and staff, a concentration of student housing and other situations typical of neighborhoods abutting a large college campus.

The 1995 Bellingham Comprehensive Plan recognizes the opportunities and contributions WWU provides to residents of the city. The plan also recognizes that the campus operates among three largely residential neighborhoods, and therefore has impacts (both positive and negative) on those neighborhoods. This situation is summed up in the following policy from the Executive Summary section of the comprehensive plan:

DP-11 BELLINGHAM MAXIMIZES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY TO THE COMMUNITY. CITY COORDINATION WITH UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES ENSURES THAT THE IMPACTS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ONGOING PROGRAMS AND CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

Campus activities have positive and negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. It is critical that residents of those neighborhoods have an opportunity to participate in planning for future campus activities.

***Recommendation #1: The City and the University agree that a collaborative City-University process, including provision for continuous involvement and participation by citizens from surrounding neighborhoods, will precede the development of campus plans and projects with significant off-campus impact.***

## SECTION IV. CIRCULATION

### IV-1. Arterial Streets

The WWU campus is served primarily by the Samish Interchange with Interstate 5 and by three secondary arterial streets: Bill McDonald Parkway from the east, 21<sup>st</sup> Street from the south to Bill McDonald Parkway, and the Lakeway Interchange with I-5, west on Holly Street to Garden Street from the north (see Figure 1).

#### Bill McDonald Parkway -

This is the main entrance to campus both from the community and from the freeway. This formal entrance was built as a parkway in the late 1960s. In the mid-1990s a planted median and tree lined boulevard treatment were added to beautify the parkway.

As of 1996, Bill McDonald Parkway carries approximately 13,600 vehicles per day (vpd). Traffic modeling indicates the parkway will operate at or above acceptable levels of service for the foreseeable future. However, Bellingham's 1995 Comprehensive Plan identifies the parkway between the Samish Interchange and 21<sup>st</sup> Street as one of 64 arterial street segments expected to operate below adopted LOS standards by 2014.

WWU Neighborhood Arterial Streets Map

### Samish Interchange -

The Samish/I-5 Interchange is the nearest freeway access to WWU. This facility is currently operating at LOS F during peak hours. Although a state facility, the city has taken the lead in determining how to upgrade the overpass to accommodate current and future traffic. The overpass experiences severe congestion resulting from closely spaced intersections and inadequate pavement width.

In 1997, studies were completed to determine the best configuration for upgrading the overpass, and project design work will be completed in 1998. Construction funding has recently been secured and planned improvements are expected to proceed according to schedule. Improvements are budgeted, with 50% of the costs to be paid by the city and 50% to come from federal grant funds. The project is included in the City's Six-Year Street Construction Program for construction in 2000-2001.

***Recommendation #2: Because WWU contributes a significant share of the trips through the Samish Interchange, their participation in funding improvements is warranted. City and University officials should work with the state legislature to obtain state funds to offset a proportional amount of the local community's share of the improvement costs. In seeking state funding, city, university and transit officials should work together on approaches that would improve WWU's use of alternative modes of transportation and reduce parking impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.***

### 21<sup>st</sup> Street -

21<sup>st</sup> Street serves as a secondary arterial carrying traffic from south Bellingham to Bill McDonald Parkway. According to traffic counts, 21st carried 5,600 vehicles per day in 1996. These counts are well within the design parameters of 5,000 to 15,000 vpd for secondary arterials.

There has been considerable discussion in the community about proposals to extend 21<sup>st</sup> Street south to Old Fairhaven Parkway. The 1980 plan for the Happy Valley Neighborhood states that 21st Street should be connected to Old Fairhaven Parkway. The plan also identified the University's intent to seek vacation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Street right-of-way north of Bill McDonald Parkway. The City Council discussed construction of the extension in the early 1990s as part of the City's Six-Year Street Construction Program. Because of citizen concern about the impacts of the extension on the Happy Valley Neighborhood, this project was removed from the Six-year program at that time. The project has not been included in yearly updates to the Six-year program since the early 1990s.

The 1995 Bellingham Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element includes an arterial street map showing 21st as a secondary arterial between Bill McDonald Parkway and Old Fairhaven Parkway. The plan also states:

"Alternative connections between the 21st Street/Donovan Avenue intersection and Old Fairhaven Parkway should be evaluated and the most appropriate route identified."

The comprehensive plan also suggests that 21st Street may be deficient as early as year 2000. Because the street carries traffic at the low end of the secondary arterial range, it seems unlikely that this problem will develop in that time frame. There is no short-term plan or funding available to upgrade the street or extend it south to Old Fairhaven Parkway. An additional factor in how 21st Street operates in the future will be the nature and design of alternative road alignments to serve proposed developments south of Old Fairhaven Parkway. Additional discussion of the issues around 21st Street will take place during the update of the Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan.

Garden Street -

Classified as a secondary arterial, Garden Street carries approximately 8,100 vehicles per day, well within design parameters. Garden Street provides access to WWU from neighborhoods to the north. Because of the topography and limited parking facilities, access to this end of campus from the community is somewhat limited.

#### IV-2. WWU's Proposed on-Campus Street Improvements

The January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan identifies improving vehicular access to the campus and reducing conflicts created by the interaction between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles as the University's primary transportation related goals. Toward this end, three principles are identified in the WWU plan:

- Single occupancy vehicle access is the lowest priority in campus circulation systems.
- Separate pedestrian, bicycle and transit circulation from private and service vehicles whenever possible.
- Provide for safe vehicular circulation to access major destination points, passenger drop zones, parking areas, and key pedestrian circulation routes.

The following recommendation should help guide preparation of the vehicle circulation section of the city's institutional master plan for the WWU campus.

***Recommendation #3: The city supports the efforts of WWU to reduce single occupant vehicle trips to campus, increase transit use by staff and students, and separate vehicles from pedestrians.***

A number of capital improvement projects are identified in the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan to accomplish these goals. Three of these projects have the potential to impact the surrounding neighborhoods and the city's transportation network. These projects are discussed in more detail below.

### **“Loop” Road -**

The proposed Loop Road from Bill McDonald Parkway is an internal campus facility that the University anticipates will address several safety problems and improve access to the south end of campus for transit, bicycles and pedestrians. This project is in the predesign phase.

***Recommendation #4: As part of the predesign work for a proposed Loop Road, the University should work with city staff to establish what impacts (if any) the new road would have on the adjacent city transportation network. Whatcom Transportation Authority officials should be involved in project design work for projects like the Loop Road to ensure that transit needs on this or any alternative internal road realignment or redesign are addressed.***

### **21<sup>st</sup> Street Realignment -**

WWU proposes to realign 21<sup>st</sup> Street with Highland Drive to eliminate intersection and roadway safety concerns and reduce traffic in the core area of campus by allowing non-campus bound vehicles to bypass campus with a direct connection between Highland Drive and Bill McDonald Parkway. This proposal has generated much interest among Happy Valley residents who have stated their opposition to the project because of concerns about the potential for increased traffic on 21st Street south of Bill McDonald Parkway. The University is interested in proceeding with predesign work to consider alternative roadway alignments and address safety concerns with the existing alignment.

***Recommendation #5: The predesign work on the 21st Street realignment project should review a number of alternatives to accomplish the safety improvements desired by the University and to address Happy Valley residents’ concerns about increased traffic on 21<sup>st</sup> Street south of Bill McDonald Parkway. Happy Valley residents should have an opportunity to help select the alternatives to be addressed in the predesign study and to review the information generated by the study. No authorization for actual construction of the realignment of 21st Street will be given until predesign work is completed and questions of alternatives, appropriate alignment, impacts and potential mitigation for surrounding neighborhoods are addressed. Whatcom Transportation Authority officials should be involved in project design work for projects which affect on and off campus transit vehicle access and circulation.***

### **High Street Pedestrian/Transit Mall -**

WWU has proposed in their January 1997 Draft Comprehensive Master Plan to convert High Street to a pedestrian and transit mall between West Campus Way and Oak Street. The stated purpose of the proposal is to make the area more pedestrian and transit accessible and reduce current conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. Toward this end, Western has asked the City to vacate this portion of High Street so

that it can be permanently closed to all vehicular traffic except transit and emergency vehicles and except for private vehicles during inclement weather. While the city supports the goal of making the area more pedestrian and transit accessible, it is not necessary or desirable to vacate the right-of-way to accomplish this goal. Design concepts such as pavement treatments, transit only lanes and pullouts, temporary bollards and other approaches can be used to encourage and protect pedestrians.

The city approved an ordinance in 1976 which allows the closure of this section of High Street from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily during academic quarters. The same ordinance requires the street to be open to all vehicles in the evenings, on weekends, and during weather conditions that require an alternate route for citizens to access adjacent neighborhoods as determined by the City Director of Public Works. Evening and weekend openings of High Street give many Bellingham residents their only view of the beautiful park-like and historical setting of the north part of the WWU campus. Many residents use those openings as an opportunity to show-off the campus to visitors, especially in rainy weather when walking tours are unappealing.

From WWU's perspective, this arrangement has not worked well over the years, since the High Street area is one of the most congested on campus and the University believes that vehicle/pedestrian conflicts are common. University police have witnessed considerable confusion about the limited access area along High Street. WWU feels that the area is difficult to manage given the variety of University-related and private vehicles, which now share the roadway with pedestrians and bicyclists. WWU has concluded that a policy of excluding private vehicles from using High Street between High Street Hall and Oak Street would eliminate both the confusion and considerable staff-hours spent on enforcement and management.

The space between Old Main, Wilson Library, and the Viking Union is one of Western's busiest pedestrian centers. The current street design and architecture has a negative impact on pedestrians, according to the University. Western has indicated that this is particularly true for the disabled, who must expend extra effort to navigate across or along the curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and roadway

The University has indicated a desire to find an acceptable aesthetic solution to the problem of the existing streetscape with its signs, lighting, and bollards, which currently emphasizes, they believe, a negative "walling off" image of the campus. WWU believes a comprehensive redesign of the space would provide both the City and the University solutions to the conflicts now present in this part of campus.

From the city's perspective, the current High Street arrangement has operated in a manner that balances needed access for transit and day time campus pedestrian/bicycle circulation with off peak (evening and early morning) access to adjacent neighborhoods.

High Street is one example of the need for street system designs, parking facilities and transit/pedestrian/bicycle facilities that improve the community's connections and access to campus.

***Recommendation #6: Designs that contribute to "walling off" Western from the community should be avoided. At the same time, street and parking facilities will need to be designed and located for safe transit/pedestrian/bicycle and service vehicle circulation as well as access by visitors and the disabled. Circulation system designs should be evaluated to ensure a balance between these objectives of improved community connections and the internal workings of the campus.***

***Recommendation #7: High Street shall not be vacated, though consideration could be given during the Institutional Master Plan process to further restricting vehicle access on High Street to transit and emergency vehicles only, except during periods of inclement weather as determined by the City Public Works Director. The City, Western and Whatcom Transportation Authority should work together to secure state and federal funding for the redesign of High Street. The City should be flexible in its application of street design standards to address both City and University goals for the redesign of High Street.***

#### IV-3. Transportation Management Program

WWU's Transportation Management Program (TMP) was instituted in 1995 to support the university's parking and transportation objectives. According to the 1992 Campus Parking and Transportation Survey, there were approximately 2,500 peak a.m. period vehicle trips to the campus each day and 36% of the university population traveled to and from the campus by driving alone; 72% of staff and faculty, 29% of all students, and 42% of all commuter students.

Essential elements of the University's TMP include reducing single occupant vehicle use by providing information and education programs for new students, initiating carpool, van pool, Campus Express Shuttle and emergency ride home programs, coordinating with WTA for transit service, and parking and transportation related planning.

Since inception of the Transportation Management Program in 1995, the University has instituted car and vanpool programs, guaranteed ride home and ride matching programs and enhanced bus service that carries approximately 3,500 riders to campus daily. Western and WTA also established a "campus express" program, serving 800 to 900 people daily through free bus and parking service from the Civic Field Park and Ride lot.

***Recommendation #8: The University should continue to work with WTA to reduce single occupant vehicle trips to campus and to complete specific pedestrian and bicycle facilities as identified in the Pedestrian Access and Bicycle Access sections of the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan.***

#### IV4. Pedestrian Circulation

According to the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan, walking is, and will continue to be the preferred means of travel to and from campus. It is estimated that 8% of employees and 43% of students currently walk to and from campus. Some of those walking may be from a vehicle parked on-street in the adjacent neighborhoods. The plan identifies existing conflicts for pedestrians involving vehicles, bicycles, service vehicles, busses, inadequate sidewalks, unimproved pathways and inadequate lighting.

***Recommendation #9: City staff will continue to work with WWU to ensure that city pedestrian improvement plans complement on-campus facilities. City and Western representatives will work with affected neighborhoods to identify where improved pedestrian connections are needed between WWU and neighboring residential areas as well as between WWU and commercial centers such as downtown, Fairhaven, and Sehome Village. Convenient pedestrian access to and on campus, including access from parking lots and transportation drop-off points, should be a priority for the City and the University in their respective capital facilities planning and implementation.***

***Recommendation # 10: Pedestrian projects should be initiated by the University to resolve the existing conflicts and to develop a more pedestrian oriented campus. These projects should be selected and prioritized according to the following principles:***

- ***Pedestrian pathways need to be oriented to maximize safety and convenience and to minimize conflicts with vehicles and bicycles.***
- ***Paths should be accessible to the disabled and secure at night with adequate lighting.***
- ***Pedestrian pathways carry large volumes of traffic during class changes and should be wide enough to accommodate peak volumes and future population increases.***
- ***To support a pedestrian orientation on campus, future academic zones should be located within a 10-minute walk from the central campus.***

***Recommendation #11: The City shall continue to explore ways to increase pedestrian safety along and across Bill McDonald Parkway.***

#### IV-5. Bicycle Circulation

The January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan estimates that 7% of the campus population currently bicycles to and from campus. An important goal of the University and the City is to increase this number. However, in many areas of the campus, bicyclists share paths with pedestrians, resulting in unsafe conditions during certain times of the day. On-campus bicycle storage and security issues must also be addressed

***Recommendation #12: To encourage increased bicycle trips to and from campus, city staff will continue to work with WWU to ensure that city bicycle improvement plans complement on-campus facilities. City and Western representatives will work with affected neighborhoods to identify improved bicycle connections between WWU and neighboring residential areas as well as between WWU and commercial centers such as downtown, Fairhaven, and Sehome Village.***

***Recommendation #13: WWU should aggressively promote bicycle use by expanding appropriate bicycle parking, and in conjunction with the city, by building bike lanes to, from and within campus, thus reducing the need to restrict bike use on campus. In order to accomplish this, WWU should:***

- ***Separate bicyclists from pedestrians and vehicles and provide for efficient and safe on-campus circulation routes.***
- ***Improve bicycle security and provide properly located and well lighted storage areas.***
- ***Integrate campus bicycle circulation routes and storage areas with the City's plans for future bicycle routing on city streets.***

## **SECTION V. PARKING**

### V-1. Issues

Another serious issue identified during the 1998 WWU Neighborhood Plan update process is parking impacts of University staff and students on the surrounding neighborhoods. With a relatively small main campus area of approximately 157 acres, areas available for parking lots compete with academic and athletic/open space needs. There are currently approximately 3,400 parking spaces on campus in surface lots. The majority of this parking is located in the south campus area, but the major parking demand is generated by buildings and activities at the central and north end of campus. According to data the University collected in 1992, Western students and staff used a significant number of the approximately 1,400 on-street parking spaces existing in nearby neighborhoods. This information was collected before the implementation of several residential parking zones and before the University instituted new programs to encourage commuting by means other than single-occupant vehicles. The University is

now (winter 1998) conducting a new study to update this information. The on-street parking by students and staff creates a parking problem in the adjacent neighborhoods, which generally contain older homes on small lots with limited off-street parking for residents.

Currently a parking deficit exists, necessitating further action by the University to encourage commuting by means other than single-occupant vehicles and the development of additional parking to be located close to buildings and activities that generate parking demand. In addition, increasing the amount of space available in off-campus park and ride lots should be considered.

Historically, the city has not required WWU to meet minimum parking requirements per city code. WWU, as a state agency, was not required to comply with local land use regulations. Prior to code changes in 1998, the city's Land Use Development Ordinance exempted development on state lands from local land use regulations. In 1998, this state agency exemption was repealed.

#### V-2. Recommendations

A number of measures could be taken by the City and the University to address the parking impacts created by university faculty, staff and students.

***Recommendation #14: Specific parking requirements or a process to determine appropriate parking requirements for existing deficiencies, for new and renovated buildings, and/or for increases in on-campus student enrollment shall be a part of the Institutional Master Plan. WWU traffic should not further impact adjacent neighborhoods. This can be accomplished in a number of ways:***

- 1. Residential parking zone implementation.***
- 2. Alternative modes increase.***
- 3. Additional on-campus parking facilities.***

***Recommendation #15: The residential parking zones recently instituted in the Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods shall be monitored to determine their effectiveness. The University has agreed to pay the administrative costs of the program for three years and may be asked to continue funding in the future. The City will pay the cost of enforcement.***

***Recommendation #16: The University should continue to work with the adjoining neighborhoods and city staff to mitigate parking impacts created by WWU students, faculty and staff.***

***Recommendation #17: Western should finance and build safe, efficiently designed and well landscaped parking facilities, especially in the northern part of campus where some of the highest traffic generators are located.***

***Recommendation #18: The City and WWU shall work together to encourage the state Legislature to provide funding for parking related improvement projects on the Western campus.***

***Recommendation #19: The University should reduce single occupant vehicle use and increase the frequency and number of transit options, car and van pools, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities to get to and from campus. WWU should also institute a bus pass program for students and staff.***

## **SECTION VI. OPEN SPACE**

### VI-1. Issues

The Western Washington University Neighborhood contains open space, which is easily accessible to students, staff and visitors. Formal open spaces owned and operated by Western include the Old Main Quad, Red Square, the Fairhaven Courtyard, the Performing Arts Center Plaza, and the Haskell Plaza. Natural open spaces include the Outback Wetland south of Fairhaven College, Sehome Hill Arboretum, and the Bird Sanctuary knoll between Old Main and the Viking Union. Sehome Hill Arboretum provides areas for academic study, trails for recreation and commuting, and a major green/open space which serves the broader community. Active recreational and educational open spaces include numerous sports playfields, experimental gardens and environmental study areas. General open spaces include buffers and wooded hillsides throughout campus which are valuable for their informal/natural qualities, their buffering characteristics, and as green backdrops.

An important component of the open spaces on the WWU campus is the outdoor sculpture collection. This internationally known collection of sculpture and siteworks is an integral part of the Western campus and is valued by the entire community. For more information on the Outdoor sculpture collection, consult the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan.

Western's January 1997 Draft Comprehensive Master Plan categorizes open space in four areas: Formal (Old Main Quad, Red Square); Preserve (Outback Wetland, Sehome Hill Arboretum); Programmed (for use by Environmental Studies students, Physical Education areas); and Non-programmed (backdrop and buffer areas). The plan also contains a number of proposed open space improvement projects. Readers should consult the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan for more detailed information.

Off campus, Western uses community facilities including Civic Stadium for football, Joe Martin field for baseball, the Frank Geri fields for softball, and Civic track for track and field events.

#### VI-2. City Open Space and Parks Facilities Near Campus (see Figure 2)

##### Neighborhood Parks

<u>Name</u>	<u>Size (acres)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Laurel Park	2	Open play area. Improvements planned include playground, picnic facilities, and basketball court.
Forest & Cedar Park	2	Open play area, basketball court, picnic area, playground. Minor improvements needed.
Lowell Park	3	Develop neighborhood. park.
Boulevard Park	16	Open play area, picnic area, boat dock, boardwalk, building. Minor improvements needed.
Sehome Hill Arboretum	165	Trails, arboretum, parking area. Minor trail improvements and connections are planned.
Connelly Cr. Corridor	---	Complete. Trail and open space corridor from Sehome Arboretum to Old Fairhaven Parkway, and includes the Connelly Creek Nature Area

***Recommendation #20: Western Washington University should continue to work closely with the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department to schedule use of City facilities. A more explicit policy or agreement that recognizes, supports, and describes the shared use of community and Western facilities by both parties shall be developed.***

***Recommendation #21: WWU is recognized as having a campus that incorporates significant natural open space areas. The University is encouraged to continue that tradition in the future.***

***Recommendation #22: The University is encouraged to continue its nationally recognized practice of creating and preserving settings for outdoor sculpture.***

## Existing Transportation Map for WWU

Open Space Map

## SECTION VII. MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

### VII-1. Property Acquisition Areas

In response to state direction, the January 1997 WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan identifies a need to expand student/staff facilities to accommodate the anticipated growth from the current 11,470 students to 14,000 (10,200 to 12,500 Full Time Equivalent) by the year 2010. At 157 acres, Western has the smallest campus of any of the state universities. Therefore, the WWU anticipates that it may need to acquire properties and develop facilities outside the existing campus.

The University initially identified in the January 1997 Draft Comprehensive Master Plan approximately 56 acres in the Happy Valley, Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods as areas within which the University may acquire property. The University's Board of Trustees later reduced these areas to approximately 45 acres. This designation allows Western to acquire properties in these areas, as they become available. The WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan directs the University to use remaining core campus areas and those areas within a 10-minute walking distance of the library for academic purposes. This means Western will attempt to move support services and other uses that do not need to be centrally located to areas outside the core area of campus. Thus the University has stated their intent to use areas acquired in Happy Valley and Sehome for general support services, offices and storage. The majority of the property acquisition zones in Happy Valley and Sehome are zoned for multi-family development and are currently developed with a mixture of older and newer single and multi-family structures.

Throughout the WWU Neighborhood Plan update process, WWU has stated a desire to add land area to the existing campus to accommodate the anticipated future growth. However, this neighborhood plan deals only with the WWU Neighborhood (the main campus area). Decisions about possible campus expansion into adjoining neighborhoods should be made only after those neighborhood plans have been updated. If the University elects to acquire property in the Happy Valley, Sehome or South Hill neighborhoods, that property can only be used in accordance with existing zoning.

***Recommendation #23: The Happy Valley, CBD, Sehome, and South Hill neighborhood plans shall contain a review and evaluation of potential campus expansion areas. Only after demonstrating that additional land area is needed and only after completion of the affected neighborhood plan(s) should property be evaluated for inclusion in the Institutional Master Plan and possible rezone to institutional. WWU is encouraged to refrain from acquiring any additional land in the Happy Valley, Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods until this planning work is completed and decisions are made about if and where campus expansion would be appropriate.***

## VII-2. Institutional Master Plan

The majority of the campus is zoned Institutional (See Section VIII, Land Use). The purpose and intent of this category is specified in Section 20.40.020 of the Land Use Development Ordinance:

A. "Intent. The Institutional general use type is intended to provide for the development of large campus type public or quasi-public uses in a planned and coordinated manner. Institutional areas should be considered where such uses utilizing at least fifty (50) acres are in single or few ownership's or are otherwise able to utilize a coordinated planned concept.

B. "Purpose. The purpose of the Institutional Use designation is to:

- (1) Delineate definite boundaries and development parameters for institutional type uses;
- (2) Insure orderly, phased development of appropriate uses within those areas;
- (3) Identify and reduce the impacts of institutional development on surrounding areas with less intensive uses;
- (4) Insure the adequacy of city utilities, streets and other services to and within institutional areas as they develop;
- (5) Insure development of institutional areas which is compatible with the physical features of those areas."

The process to develop an institutional master plan (IMP) is also explained in the City's Land Use Development Ordinance. This process includes at least one neighborhood meeting as well as public work sessions and hearings before the Planning Commission and Council. The institutional master plan should address issues such as appropriate land uses, parking requirements, building height and setback requirements, landscaping and buffering, signage and other development standards deemed appropriate by the Commission and Council during the development of the IMP.

After development of an institutional master plan by the City and Western, individual projects would be subject to the planned development process for institutions as set forth in the Bellingham Municipal Code in effect at time of project application. Those projects that were found consistent with the IMP and had little or no impact on the surrounding neighborhoods would be reviewed administratively. Projects which either were not consistent with the IMP or which raised significant planning issues would be reviewed in a public meeting process before the Planning Commission, with appeals of administrative decisions conducted in a public hearing by the City Council.

The University has indicated a desire to form an Institutional Master Plan Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives from various on and off campus groups, including the Happy Valley, Sehome and South Hill neighborhoods and city planning

staff. The purpose of this group would be to advise the University administration on relevant issues associated with the institutional master planning process for WWU. Alternatively, this committee could be formed by the WWU President and the Mayor to advise BOTH Western and the city administration on process and content issues relevant to the institutional master plan.

### VII-3. Recommendations

***Recommendation #24: WWU, the city and the adjoining neighborhoods should continue a cooperative process to develop an Institutional Master Plan for WWU. Initially, the IMP would cover:***

- 1. The main campus area which is already zoned Institutional,***
- 2. The areas approved for rezoning to Institutional in this neighborhood plan update.***
- 3. The Physical Plant property (currently zoned Public), and the abutting block to the west of the Physical Plant (currently zoned Residential-Multi) where Western already owns the majority of the property.***
- 4. The Western-owned properties abutting Bill McDonald Parkway (currently zoned Residential-Multi) designated as the proposed site for a stormwater detention facility.***
- 5. Two Western-owned parcels at the north end of 20<sup>th</sup> Street (currently zoned Residential-Single) proposed as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Street Realignment.***
- 6. The Western-owned properties abutting Oak Street (currently zoned Public and Residential-Multi) and currently being used for parking lots 7G and 3R.***
- 7. The Alumni Association facility and adjoining lot.***

***Additions to the WWU IMP relating to any WWU uses in the adjoining neighborhoods should be considered cooperatively by WWU, the City, and the adjoining neighborhoods simultaneously with or immediately following City consideration of the updates to those neighborhood plans.***

***Recommendation #25: The institutional master plan should cover issues specified in the Institutional Development chapter of the City's Land Use Development Ordinance. Examples include land use, circulation, utilities, open space, parking, landscaping, maintenance and appearance of properties, and development schedules.***

Another important aspect of the institutional master plan is development and standards related to the appearance and operation of the edges of campus. Often these areas have the most impacts on the adjoining residential areas. For example, activities

conducted at the Physical Plant property in the Happy Valley Neighborhood have both visual and functional impacts on the surrounding residences.

***Recommendation #26: The WWU Physical Plant property should be reviewed during the institutional master plan process to determine alternatives for improving the appearance of this area and mitigating the impacts on surrounding properties while still performing the functions needed by the University.***

The University's idea of forming an Institutional Master Plan Advisory Committee has merit. It could serve to improve communication between the University and its neighbors and could serve as an ongoing forum for discussing and resolving issues dealing with campus activities and future development at Western.

#### VII-4. Amendments to the Institutional Master Plan

The following recommendations shall guide the process to amend the institutional master plan for WWU.

***Recommendation 27: Prior to the City's review of any proposed campus expansion, additional information will be required on issues such as traffic patterns, parking needs, and the economic impact of any proposed expansion zone.***

***Recommendation 28: If additional land area is needed to accommodate future enrollment increases or institutional uses, a process involving the City, WWU and representatives from the three neighborhoods shall be established to recommend to the City Council and Western where the campus might most appropriately be expanded. This process shall occur during development and review of the WWU IMP; but the City shall act to amend the IMP to reflect any expansion recommendation only during the consideration of the affected neighborhood plan (the Happy Valley, Sehome and/or South Hill neighborhood plans).***

#### VII-5. Public Facilities and Utilities

Drainage and water quality from areas containing impervious surfaces is the main public facility issue in this neighborhood. WWU has committed to meeting State and City stormwater regulations. To accomplish this, the University has started a planning process to provide a regional stormwater quality facility that will serve the southern portion of campus. This facility is preliminarily planned for an area the University owns south of Bennett Avenue and west of 22nd Street.

***Recommendation #29: The University should work with the city and representatives of the Happy Valley Neighborhood to design the site containing the stormwater management facility in a manner which minimizes impacts on the existing vegetation and the neighborhood in general. The facility shall be designed to provide water quality benefits to the campus and the surrounding neighborhood. Efforts should be made to develop alternatives to a single centralized drainage site on the south side of Bill McDonald Parkway in order to retain existing natural vegetation on the site. Alternative drainage and retention methods are encouraged as a part of developing a campus-wide drainage plan.***

**MAP, WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAND USE**

## **SECTION VIII. SUBAREA DESCRIPTIONS AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

### **Area 1**

This area includes the State owned 157-acre main campus area administered by Western Washington University.

The University and the City should jointly develop an Institutional Master Plan (IMP) for the campus area which comprehensively addresses issues related to the development of the campus and its impacts on surrounding areas. The recommendations in this neighborhood plan are intended to provide the basis for the IMP, which should be completed in 1998. Once the institutional master plan is adopted, individual projects will be required to use the planned development process.

---

### **AREA 1 LAND USE DESIGNATION: INSTITUTIONAL**

---

### **Area 2**

Sehome Hill Arboretum is jointly owned by the City of Bellingham and WWU and is administered by the Arboretum Board. The arboretum is intended to be primarily a natural area, where the undisturbed processes of growth, competition, decay and succession can be observed and studied, and where plant species native to Whatcom County and adjoining counties will be growing in their natural surroundings. It is also intended to be a place where the general public can observe these processes with reasonably safe and easy access, without charge, and without damage to the biotic community.

In addition the arboretum provides a place for recreational enjoyment for hiking and scenic beauty within the arboretum and vista views of the Cascades, Mt. Baker, Bellingham Bay, the San Juan Islands and the City of Bellingham.

The Open Space Element of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of this asset to the community and its function as a major open space adjacent to the WWU campus and recommends continued public use.

There are also public utilities on the site (water reservoir, broadcast tower).

Development will have to be carefully planned, taking into consideration the environmental sensitivity of the slopes and the importance of Sehome Hill as a visual landmark in the community.

---

### **AREA 2 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

---

**Area 3**

This area contains housing for college students and is owned by Western Washington University.

---

**AREA 3 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

---

As adopted by Ordinance No. 8868 and amended by Ordinances 8946, 10176, 1998-09-077 and 2004-12-087.

## **WWU NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN - Glossary of Terms -**

**6-Year Program** - The City of Bellingham's Six-Year Street Construction Program.

**BMC** - Bellingham Municipal Code.

**Comprehensive Plan** - The Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, adopted January, 1996.

**DP** – A Development Patterns and Community Character Policy, as found in the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

**EIS** – Environmental Impact Statement:

An information document prepared to assess the likely impacts on the environment from a particular project or action. As the scope or nature of a proposed project or action changes over time, a supplement to the original EIS may be necessary.

**FDP** - WWU's 1974 Facilities Development Plan

**IMP** – Institutional Master Plan:

A plan jointly developed and agreed to by the City and WWU and adopted by the City in accordance with Section 20.40 of the Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance.

**LOS** - Level of Service:

A description of the amount of traffic along a street or at an intersection, rated "A" for best (free flowing) to "F" for worst (gridlock).

**MOA** – Memorandum of Agreement:

A temporary agreement between the City and WWU establishing the process for City review of proposed WWU development projects. This agreement and review process will be in effect on an interim basis, until the City and WWU have reached agreement on an institutional master plan for WWU.

**RPZ** - Residential Parking Zones:

A program begun in 1997 by the City in the South Hill and Sehome neighborhoods designed to reduce out-of-neighborhood on-street parking by allowing only residents and their guests to park on a street during certain hours of the day.

**SOV** – Single Occupancy Vehicle, an automobile containing only a driver.

**TMP** - Transportation Management Program:

A program adopted by WWU designed to reduce use of Single Occupancy Vehicles, reducing traffic and parking demand.

**Vacation/vacate** - Removal of the right of traffic to use a particular street.

**VPD** – vehicles per day, a measure of traffic through an intersection or on a street.

**Western/WWU** - Western Washington University.

**WTA** - Whatcom Transportation Authority.

**WWU Draft Comprehensive Master Plan** - A draft document released in January, 1997 by WWU to guide campus growth and development for the next 10 to 20 years.

**WWUNP** - Western Washington University Neighborhood Plan:  
A plan adopted by the City of Bellingham for the Western Neighborhood, one of the 23 recognized neighborhoods in the City of Bellingham.