



NEW WHATCOM

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP

JANUARY 24, 2006

OVERVIEW

Approximately 200 people attended the fourth public workshop for the New Whatcom project on January 24, 2006. The goal of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for the Bellingham community to both review and comment on four initial design concepts for the New Whatcom Master Plan. The design concepts included:

- Green Fingers
- Green Bank
- Green Seam
- Pearl Parks

Participants had the opportunity to discuss the concepts with the LMN design/architect team, as well as with other community members and Port and City staff. They also had the opportunity to share their comments with the group as a whole. The workshop enabled the design team to hear a number of ideas about how the public would like to see the waterfront redeveloped, including specific design elements favored, and those disliked.

In addition to attending a public meeting, members of the Bellingham community also had the opportunity to comment on the design concepts through the New Whatcom website. Those comments have been summarized in a separate document. The information shared at this meeting will be used to narrow the four concepts into one preferred "base map" for the design. This base map will be combined with different land use scenarios to create three alternatives for the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Scheduled to take place between March and October 2006, the EIS will evaluate all of the potential environmental impacts and benefits of waterfront redevelopment. Additional public meetings and other opportunities for public comment will be conducted during the EIS process.

MEETING FORMAT

When each person arrived they received a copy of each of the four design concepts with space for comments, as well as an "existing conditions" sheet, which they could use to create their own design. Stationed around the room were large graphic displays of each design concept, as well as a "mix and match" station that was available for those who used elements from each of the designs to create their own concept.

After introductory remarks from the City of Bellingham, the Port of Bellingham, and the Waterfront Advisory Group, Mark Hinshaw of LMN Architects provided the audience with an overview of each of the design concepts. Mark pointed out where the concepts were similar, as well as the differences between them. He explained that the final single concept, which will be used as the basis for the EIS evaluation, is likely to include a mix of several of the elements contained in all four of the designs.

After Mark's presentation, attendees had time to walk around the room, take a closer look at the design concepts, and speak to representative from the design team. Participants then gathered by their favorite design concept. Members of each group reported why they chose the concept, including their favorite elements and elements they would like to see added or removed.

SUMMARY

What follows is a summary of the comments received during the meeting. In addition to oral comments, attendees turned in 27 comment sheets at the meeting, and those remarks have been incorporated here. Comments in bold are those that were stated most frequently throughout the evening.

GREEN FINGERS

The Green Fingers concept was the most popular design of the evening. People liked this design for its large amount of greenspace and waterfront access. Preservation of historic buildings was also a well-liked element of the design. The footbridge was generally accepted as a good idea, but some concerns were raised as to the exact design and location, especially pertaining to views and boat passage.

Many people did not like the routing of auto traffic along the waterfront. Others did not like the roundabout at the end of Cornwall. Some mentioned they would like to see even more parks and greenspace in the plan.

Many people wanted to see more greenspace and beach access in the area that is close to the deep water port of off Pine Street included in this design. Some also felt that angling the streets, as in the Green Bank design, would make better use of views and natural sunlight.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Large amount of parks/greenspace**
- **Waterfront access and parks along the waterfront**
- **Pedestrian bridge**
- **Preservation of GP buildings**
- Long streets
- The esplanade
- Large greenspace around the log pond
- The street grid, and how it syncs with the existing downtown
- Transit and bike circulation routes
- Supports high-density development
- The park at the foot of Cornwall
- Connection to Maritime Heritage Park

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- Not enough greenspace in the area next to the deep water port off of Pine Street.
- Not enough greenspace
- The Cornwall roundabout
- Car traffic on waterfront boulevard
- The streets are not angled for maximum view
- Not enough Greenspace off of Cornwall
- Keeping old buildings
- Footbridge blocks view
- Limited by designing around old buildings
- Boat launch is in the wrong place
- Rerouting of train against the bluff as it will cause neighborhood noise
- Not enough connection to Columbia neighborhood

Additional suggestions for this concept

- Separate car traffic and pedestrians
- Bikers and pedestrians need to be separate
- Create two pedestrian bridges
- Add a beach park east of Cornwall
- Need walking connection to WWU/South Hill

GREEN BANK

Popular elements in the Green Bank design included the pedestrian bridge and the Oak Street flyover. Though some thought the road grid in this design was excessive, many favored the road configuration, commenting they liked the loop roads/touch points to the water, and the separation of the roads and the shoreline. The angling of the street to face the water was also regarded as a good idea to maximize views.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- Pedestrian bridge
- Streets angled to face water
- Oak Street flyover
- Loop roads; touch points to the water
- Separation of roads and shoreline
- Greenspace along deep water port
- Greenspace in center of historic buildings

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- Not enough open space/greenspace
- Road grid is excessive/too many streets
- Deep water dock is not necessary
- Major road doesn't give waterfront views
- Greenspace around log pond is too small

- Development at foot of Cornwall
- Footbridge too far out into the water
- Marina
- Removal of old buildings
- Lacks shore in Whatcom Waterway for boat services
- Not good connection from WWU/South Hill
- Rerouting of train against the bluff as it will cause neighborhood noise
- Bridge cuts out closer access to downtown

Additional suggestions for this concept

- Separate bike and foot trails

GREEN SEAM

People liked the large amounts of greenspace and parks in this concept, especially the larger, more open, and presumably safer paths. People also liked how the greenspaces are linked and the shoreline access. Several participants commented they like the traffic flow in this design.

The auto bridge over the water received mixed reviews. While many people liked the bridge, others weren't sure that it was necessary or beneficial. Many people remarked that they missed the footbridge in this option. The lack of greenspace was mentioned by several citizens, especially in the area next to the deep water port off of Pine Street.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Open, safe paths**
- **Large amount of greenspace and parks**
- **Shoreline access**
- **Good traffic flow**
- **Auto bridge over water**
- **Linked greenspaces**
- Good link to Sehome Hill
- Minimal roads through site
- Pedestrian walk further back from the water
- Roads angled toward the water
- Connection from South Hill to the waterfront
- Connection to downtown

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Not enough greenspace**
- **The bridge keeps people from approaching downtown**
- **The vehicle bridge**
- **No open space along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- **No footbridge**
- **Re-routing of the trains**

- Interior roadways
- The connection at East Oak should be reconsidered
- Does not reflect Bellingham's community character
- Seemed too urban
- Lacks esplanade
- Lacks trail through to south end of Cornwall
- Street grid not oriented with downtown
- Roundabout

Additional suggestions for this concept

- **Needs a footbridge**
- Separate bike and pedestrian paths
- Needs an enlarged beach at the end of Cornwall
- Is the area wheelchair accessible from South Hill?

PEARL PARKS

The most popular element in this design was the greenspace next to the area of the deep water port off of Pine Street. Many remarked that this design element should be included in the final design, regardless of which design concept is ultimately implemented. People also like the esplanade. The waterfront boulevard received mixed reviews; many liked it, but others did not like having the road so close to the water.

Many participants commented they missed the footbridge in this concept. Others remarked the design lacked sufficient greenspace, and did not like the way the parks were separated.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Greenspace along Pine Street**
- **Esplanade**
- **Waterfront boulevard**
- Parks and greenspace
- Shoreline access linking walking and bike paths
- Some interface with cars and shoreline
- Kayak launching access on 15 foot right-of-way

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Not enough greenspace**
- **No footbridge across waterway**
- **Waterfront boulevard – road too close to water**
- Boulevard and walkway combined is a bad idea
- Traditional blocks
- Too urban
- Pocket parks in center
- Separation of park spaces

- Too much concrete
- Re-routing of train

Additional suggestions for this concept

- Needs a bridge connecting main campus to central waterfront
- Create one central connection from waterway to greenspace above Cornwall
- Needs more beaches
- Separate pedestrian and bike paths

MIX and MATCH & ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Is consideration being given to how light rail can fit into the plan?
- No waterfront walls or stairs
- Create a waterfront plaza along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street
- Extend the pier for historic ships to dock
- Create a waterfront development along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street that could include cruise ships, theatres, hotels, etc.
- Build a tram to Sehome Hill
- Along the water near the marina create an artistic mall with monuments (as in Washington DC)