



# **NEW WHATCOM**

## **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

### **JANUARY 31, 2006**

#### **OVERVIEW**

Approximately 90 people attended the fifth public workshop for the New Whatcom project on January 31, 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 25 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. The large amounts of parks and greenspace were very popular elements of this design. People also liked the retention of the GP buildings. The street alignment was well received; participants felt there were good street connections to adjoining neighborhoods and liked the roads being separated from sensitive shoreline areas.

The pedestrian bridge was generally well-liked, though many had questions about its location and design. Some felt the visitor moorage was located too close to an intertidal area. Many participants felt the design lacked park and greenspace along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street. Others wanted to see more park space around the Cornwall roundabout.

#### **Elements community members liked most about this concept**

- **Large amount of parks and greenspace**
- **Retention of old GP buildings**
- **Street alignment**
- **Good street connections to adjoining neighborhoods**
- **Pedestrian bridge over water**
- **Roads pulled back from sensitive shorelines**
- Allows for modular development
- Bike path along waterfront
- Depth of park along waterfront
- Long cross-cutting park blocks, divides the area into neighborhoods
- Circulation loop
- Waterfront esplanade
- Good interior park to waterfront connections

#### **Elements community members liked least about this concept**

- **Lacks park and greenspace along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- **Visitor moorage is too close to intertidal area**
- Primary street route might become a short cut for through traffic
- Cross-cutting elements of parks divides the area too much
- Lacks a waterfront boulevard
- Street grid is too loose

- The large amount of greenspace will mean more dense development
- The main arterial along the waterfront – would be better if it was a secondary street a little further away from the water
- No southern outlet
- Boat launch too close to pedestrian walkway
- Footbridge is outside visitor moorage- how will boats get under it?
- Roundabout at the foot of Cornwall
- Too few connections to other streets
- No apparent bike/pedestrian way that swoops all the way past Bellwether

### **Additional suggestions for this concept**

- **Needs a park along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- **Create more park at the Cornwall roundabout**
- Needs some pedestrian only street areas
- Increase clearance under bridge for boats
- Keep deep water area for cruise ship docking
- Work out grades for trails – some are very steep
- Needs more habitat restoration along the north side of the waterway
- Would like auto bridge at Holly Street to improve intertidal flow at Whatcom Creek
- Need to add connecting road to State and Forest to assist traffic flow
- Internal streets could ease the grid with gentle curves

### **GREEN BANK**

Greenspace was a popular element in this design, especially the parks along the water and the connection of interior parks to the waterfront. The shoreline enhancements along the Whatcom Waterway were also mentioned as positive additions. Many appreciated the reuse of the old GP buildings.

The circulation route into the adjacent neighborhoods was a popular element, as was the Oak Street flyover. The footbridge was a generally well-supported element, with some questioning its exact location. Some in the group did not like the angled street grid, and others wished this design included the waterfront boulevard.

Many participants wanted the design to include parks and green space along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street.

### **Elements community members liked most about this concept**

- **Footbridge**
- **Circulation route into the adjacent neighborhoods and city**
- **Interior greenspace reaches to water, parks along the water**
- **Shoreline enhancement on both sides of Whatcom Waterway**
- **Reuse of old buildings**
- **Oak Street flyover**
- Reuse of old buildings
- Cute street grid

- Central park idea as an organizing element

### **Elements community members liked least about this concept**

- **Lacks waterfront boulevard**
- **Angled streets**
- No continuous waterfront access
- Not enough open space and park area
- Street grid has weird angles – should watch grid to east and north
- Boat launch too close to pedestrian walkway
- Footbridge before moorage – how will boats get under?
- Roundabout at end of Cornwall
- Traffic route is confusing

### **Additional suggestions for this concept**

- **Needs a park along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- Interior greenspace could become a public plaza, like Granville Island
- A ferry from the area to Anacortes
- Add more beach area at the end of Cornwall
- University, NOAA, ferries, or cruise ships could use deep water port

## **GREEN SEAM**

In this design, community members favored the large amounts of contiguous greenspace, especially as those areas connected to the waterfront. The Oak Street flyover was also a popular design element. The auto bridge garnered mixed reviews. Many like the bridged, but had differing ideas as to where it should be located. Others wanted a pedestrian only bridge.

Several people commented this design would be improved with a boulevard along the waterfront and with a park along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street.

### **Elements community members liked most about this concept**

- **Large amount of contiguous greenspace**
- **Auto Bridge**
- **Oak Street flyover**
- Central gathering space
- Parks on both sides of the development area
- Central boulevard
- Green corridor from waterfront to Cornwall
- Artistic street connection over Whatcom Waterway
- Trail system that connects to State Street and winds to the waterfront

### **Elements community members liked least about this concept**

- **Auto bridge**
- Angled streets
- Bridge would block views from Maritime Heritage Park

- Big areas without green relief
- Buildings close to the water
- Central boulevard at the interior allows more development on the water
- Through road would encourage people to use the area as a shore cut
- Street flow is too chopped up
- Not enough access to downtown traffic flow
- North section dead ends – a loop would be better
- The bridge is too close to the shore

### **Additional suggestions for this concept**

- **Would prefer a boulevard along the waterfront**
- **Needs a park along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- Could be site for new library, marine museum, or NW Indian museum
- Move bridge out to better access marina
- Bridge should replace existing crossing at Holly Street
- Create an additional pedestrian bridge
- The bridge should be pedestrian only

### **PEARL PARKS**

In this design many people favored the grid pattern of the streets as well as the traffic loop. Some participants liked the esplanade, while the waterfront boulevard got both good and bad reviews. Many did not like the idea of vehicle traffic along the waterfront.

Several people felt this design lacked sufficient park space and did not like the way the parks in the plan were surrounded by streets. Others felt the parks were isolated, and would be improved if they were connected by trails or greenspace. Many also felt the design would be better with more parks along the waterfront.

### **Elements community members liked most about this concept**

- **Esplanade**
- **Waterfront boulevard**
- **Grid pattern for streets**
- **Traffic loop – good flow**
- Pocket parks
- Traffic flow in the north
- No over-water road or path
- Potential for mass transit
- Potential for unique blocks with their own character
- Stairway access from Broadway
- The Laurel Street connection
- Layout of neighborhoods

### **Elements community members liked least about this concept**

- **Not enough park space**
- **Parks are isolated, not connected by paths**

- **Waterfront boulevard**
- **Parks surrounded by streets on all sides**
- Needs a park in the area of deep water port, along Pine Street
- Transit circulator route – this area is ideally a seamless extension, not its own world
- Traffic loop causes more traffic moving faster
- Boat launch is too close to pedestrian walkway
- Boat moorage is in sensitive habitat/creek outlet – problem with noise/pollution
- Development is too close to sensitive shoreline habitat
- Lack of pedestrian bridge
- The non-vehicle trails are too close to vehicle access streets
- There are no quiet walking areas

### **Additional suggestions for this concept**

- **Parks should be located on the waterfront**
- Esplanade needs generous green space on the water side
- Consider making the project a pilot project under LEED neighborhoods
- Incorporate stairway access from Broadway into all concepts

### **MIX and MATCH & ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

- The area around the log pond should not be accessible – access by view point to preserve seal haul out area - the public loves viewing these marine mammals
- The railroad is missing from all four site plans – the one feature/constraint that is fixed – seems it should be prominently featured (and ameliorated) in any design plan
- Habitat and greenspace needs should preempt design in places where habitat is valuable and irreplaceable – the road should be located away from the water’s edge and habitat should be restored at the edge, including a gradual slope to water, native plantings, and some riparian plants – include at least one sandy beach
- Will need a tree height and building height plan to deal with view concerns
- Need working waterfront element - could have light industry or commercial uses if separated from shoreline
- The Growth Management Act requires infilling - this plan promotes urban sprawl by forcing industrial uses to outlying farmland
- The kayak launch is not appropriate unless the beach is made much larger – the launch near the over water connection to Boulevard Park is near an eelgrass bed which should be taken into consideration
- Institute mixed use, not just condos - institutional arts and cultural uses that build on history of the site would be great uses
- Against container shipping and cruise ships
- Holland uses a “rubber band planning” approach for bike routes. That might be a useful concept here, as well.
- Like the “urban-ness” of pearl parks, perhaps have one “finger” and pearl parks
- Design street grid to be very transit friendly – bring WTA into next phase of design process
- If this site is to reflect the best of downtown, a variety of heights should be provided 1 to 20 stories.

- Get rid of current Ivy-Wharf connector – its not safe – make a 90 degree intersection at state (with Forest) or a roundabout.
- Need a water taxi landing
- Co-gen plant needs murals – let high school students do them
- Could we get a “London Bridge” over water, with business, buildings, etc?
- Right of way on bluff should be wide to provide permanent green space view corridors
- The boat launch is located near a pocket beach – another location should be chosen
- The grain of historic buildings drives more orthogonal development. This, in turn, extends the adjacent street pattern
- Locate the Coast Guard in the marina