



NEW WHATCOM

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 1, 2006

OVERVIEW

Approximately 120 people attended the sixth public workshop for the New Whatcom project on February 1, 2006. This meeting was held especially for the five neighborhoods that adjoin the New Whatcom area; Central Business District, Columbia, Lettered Streets, Sehome, and South Hill. 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 and Darby Watson of LMN Architects provided the audience with an overview of each of the design concepts. They pointed out where the concepts were similar, as well as the differences between them. They also 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 the 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.

Meeting participants then regrouped along neighborhood lines. Each neighborhood group discussed issues specific to their communities, and reported to all present.

SUMMARY

What follows is a summary of the comments received during the meeting. In addition to oral comments, attendees turned in 42 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

Green Fingers was the most popular design concept. It was favored for its large amount of greenspace (though many commented they would like to see even more). Many commented they like the large swaths (fingers) of greenspace, and would like to see more greenspace in the area of the deepwater port along Pine Street. The pedestrian bridge was a very popular aspect of the design. Several people commented that they like the retention of the GP buildings.

Many liked the waterfront esplanade. Several said they did not like vehicular traffic along the waterfront and that they wanted pedestrian and bike trails along the waterfront to be separate from car traffic. Participants generally approved of the traffic circulation route.

Some citizens felt the street grid aligned well with street in surrounding neighborhoods, while others felt there were not sufficient connections to downtown. Others felt that the connections to surrounding neighborhoods need to be improved. Some participants thought the Oak Street flyover should be added to this design.

Many thought the block size was too big, and others commented the streets should be angled as they are in the Green Seam design.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- Pedestrian bridge
- Large amounts of greenspace
- Retention of old GP buildings
- Curving road along park edge
- Street grid aligns with surrounding street grid
- Waterfront esplanade
- Swaths of green breaking up developed areas
- Circulation route
- Finger parks
- Contiguous greenspace
- Access for people to water

- Good pedestrian bridge from Eldridge over railroad
- Harborside street
- Keep the deep water port
- Wider promenade along water
- At least one large park for larger programming/public facilities
- Connection to greenspace around marina
- Visitor moorage
- Park access in multiple areas of the site
- Grid compatible with downtown
- Street connections to CBD and neighborhoods
- Huge park near CBD
- Greenspace around log pond, between existing buildings, and around new harbor
- Long primary road, if it is for walking, bikes, trolley – not cars
- Allows adequate area for deep water dock development
- Main boulevard is set back from the waterfront
- Separate bike and pedestrian trail along waterway
- Reasonable vehicle flow through area
- Finger parks will define neighborhoods
- No Oak Street flyover
- Like the idea of a block of buildings, a block of parks, etc.

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Poor downtown connectivity**
- **Needs greenspace along deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- **Block size too big**
- **Not enough greenspace**
- Marina space reserved for rich folks
- Less connection to lettered streets, Columbia neighborhood
- No entrance on South side, at Wharf street
- Doesn't extend walkway on north side of Whatcom Creek/estuary
- No parks near the neighborhoods
- Primary street through middle
- Street layout
- Too many roads near the water
- Allowing WWU to move into this area - it is a great university but an awful neighbor
- More greenspace in the central waterfront area of the site
- The foot bridge is too expensive - restructure to visitor moorage
- No vehicular connection at Wharf/Oak or Chestnut/Roeder

Additional suggestions for this concept

- **Create greenspace along the deep water port**
- **Move the main boulevard back from the waterfront**
- **Separate bikes and pedestrians from cars on the waterfront boulevard**

- **Might benefit from Oak Street flyover**
- **Angle the road grid like in the Green Seam concept**
- Would rather see greenspace with trail around the Whatcom Waterway
- Need more space for boat launch
- Does the marina have to be a given? What are the alternatives?
- Need to show pedestrian bridge from Eldridge over railroad
- Add connecting walkways from Broadway down to the water
- Get rid of Burlington Northern and reroute away from the water
- Angle the road grid like in the Green Seam concept
- Be able to walk without crossing traffic from WWU/South Hill to the area
- Secondary and primary streets should be minimized – move them to outside the area away from the water
- Enhance waterfront beachfront areas for recreation
- Why not make end of Cornwall all park?
- Should create a beach to northwest of Cornwall
- Create greenspace in the terminal dock area and the northwest side between waterways
- Increase greenspace percentage to at least 40% with more strategically located parks
- Incorporate the Green Seam park idea into this concept
- Need railroad overpass at Oak Street
- Use this plan with Green Bank's street layout and southern road over tracks
- Move the bridge back
- Increase public access and parks

GREEN BANK

In this concept people liked the smaller blocks, the angled street pattern, and multiple access points into the area. Participants also liked the circulation route, and cars being pulled back from the waterfront. Other popular design elements included the pedestrian bridge and the Oak Street flyover. Many liked the preservation of the GP buildings, and the greenspace between them.

People felt the design did not include enough greenspace, and especially needed more greenspace and public access in the area of the deep water port along Pine Street. Some felt there was not adequate connection to downtown.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Angled street pattern creates maximum view**
- **Pedestrian bridge**
- **Smaller blocks**
- **Oak Street flyover**
- **Several accesses into the areas**
- **The large greenspace between the GP buildings**
- **Inclusion of old buildings**
- **Cars pulled away from waterfront**
- **Circulation loop**

- Central mall between existing buildings
- Small blocks orient north south
- At least one large park for larger programming/public facilities
- Park access in multiple areas of the site
- Touches the water at several points
- Stairs down from Broadway
- Traffic away from the waterfront
- The over-the-track bridge

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Poor connection to downtown**
- **Not enough greenspace**
- **No greenspace/public access to waterfront along deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- Poor connection to lettered streets, Columbia neighborhood
- Bridge cuts waterway and bypasses downtown
- Oak Street flyover is too expensive and disruptive of view and pedestrian space
- Lack of boulevard
- Too many streets for cars in the plan – should have only secondary streets on the site
- Not enough greenspace at log pond
- No linkage between Roeder and Holly to city center
- Shifting of grid – Bellingham’s grid shifts too many times already, making it hard to get one’s bearings
- Premium view (south) has no public access
- Marina – space reserved for rich folks
- Street grid does not promote through flow
- Residential development at foot of Cornwall
- Concerned about traffic along State/Boulevard/Waterfront roundabout

Additional suggestions for this concept

- **Create greenspace/public access along the deep water port**
- Need contiguous green area along the water
- Add greenspace along northwest side of Whatcom Waterway
- Include more park space at the roundabout
- What are alternatives to the marina?
- Needs better pedestrian access from Eldridge and lettered streets
- Put a height limit on buildings

GREEN SEAM

In this concept participants like the angled streets, and the differing block sizes. People also liked that the boulevard is pulled back from the water, and, instead, curves through the middle of the area. Many liked the large green connections through the area, though others felt there was not enough greenspace included in the design.

Citizens said they liked having the bridge closer to downtown. The Oak Street flyover and preservation of historic buildings were also popular design elements.

Many did not like the roundabout. Several participants commented they did not like the auto bridge. Some suggested it should be for pedestrians and bikes only. Many people wanted to see greenspace and public access along the deepwater port added to the design.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Good orientation of angled streets to view**
- **Bridge closer to downtown**
- **Differing block sizes**
- **Waterfront boulevard back from edge or water**
- **Oak Street flyover**
- **The curving boulevard through the middle**
- **Green connections – large swatch of green through center**
- **Preservation of historic buildings**
- Curved roads
- Different block sizes
- Waterfront is connected to downtown via greenways
- Natural shape of greenspaces
- Access from Boulevard Park arterial
- Big waterfront park in front of Co-gen plant
- Expanded streets that include cars over Whatcom Waterway
- Road network includes alternatives to Roeder
- Good connection on south
- Road instead of footbridge
- Large contiguous park space for larger programming/facilities
- Easier access across waterway via bridge, although not necessarily for vehicles
- Visitor moorage

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Auto bridge over waterway**
- **Not enough greenspace**
- **Roundabout**
- Lack of greenspace by the existing large buildings to offset their mass and industrial feel
- Street grid does not promote flow through
- Development at south end of Cornwall – should be a park
- Arterial cutting through site

- Shifting road grid from nearby areas
- No Roeder/Chestnut connector
- Needs more access to downtown
- Needs more greenspace
- Need to enhance walkway connections to Fairhaven and Squaticum
- Primary streets should be moved to outside the area away from the water
- Oak Street flyover is too intrusive and expensive

Additional suggestions for this concept

- **Bridge over Whatcom Waterway should be restricted to foot and bikes only**
- **Include public access/greenspace along deep water port**
- **Limited connection to downtown**
- No direct connections to lettered streets, Columbia neighborhood
- What are the alternative to the marina?
- Roeder Avenue should be main traffic street
- Should keep more of the deep water port for commercial
- Need better street connections around Bay Street
- Ivy Street roundabout might not work
- Footbridges should not be too limited, excluding runners with strollers or families with bikes and bike trailers

PEARL PARKS

The loop for transit and street connections to downtown were both popular aspects of this design. Many also liked the greenspace along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street.

Several participants commented there was not enough greenspace, and the parks shown are too small and too far away from the water. People also found this design was too oriented toward cars and did not like the road so close to the water. They also did not like the hard edge along the waterfront. Some said they missed the footbridge in this design.

Elements community members liked most about this concept

- **Street connectivity to downtown**
- **Greenspace along the deep water port in the area of Pine Street**
- **Loop for transit or jitney**
- No bridge encourages connectivity to downtown
- Full access to shoreline by pedestrians
- Great connection to marina, heritage park, cultural district
- Wide greenspace on both sides of Whatcom Waterway
- Access more directly to downtown
- Visitor moorage
- Greenspace on south end of GP area
- Stairs up to Columbia and lettered streets
- Nothing intervening between water and public access
- No bridge over Whatcom Waterway allows visitor moorage for sailboats

- Pedestrian and bike access
- Waterfront boulevard
- Greenstrip on the south exposure
- Waterfront greenspace
- Parks inset into the buildings
- Saves existing buildings
- Large central park area near old town nicely located

Elements community members liked least about this concept

- **Parks are small, and away from the water**
- **The parks are too small**
- **Roads too close to the water**
- **Too car oriented**
- **Not enough greenspace**
- **Hard edge along waterfront**
- **No footbridge**
- Ineffective circulation
- Street outlay
- Limited downtown connection
- Little connection to lettered streets, Columbia neighborhood
- Not enough greenspace around log pond
- No access in area of Wharf Street
- Orientation of streets limits views to water
- All development space in large blocks (use small blocks)
- Most urban – good size internal parks
- Boulevard combined with bike and pedestrian trail right on waterway – this will cause conflicts and lead to vehicle related pollution of waterway
- Marina
- No connection from south only at dry dock
- Large blocks

Additional suggestions for this concept

- What are alternatives to the marina?
- Add walking connection to WWU/South Hill
- Please do not put buildings in area of Cornwall roundabout
- Interconnectivity between the other waterfront parks and marinas is needed as well as trails across the area behind the marina – connect neighborhoods and downtown
- Add greenspace on south end of GP area to Green Fingers concept
- No buildings in the area of the Cornwall roundabout – or lower buildings if any

MIX and MATCH & ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- I like ample bicycle routes – Vancouver’s English Bay is a fine example of multiple use
- The area behind the marina in all designs lacks green areas

- Please control building heights at the south “brown” area, and along Cornwall – lets not build more view blocking corridors like all of the four story buildings along State Street
- Pattern of existing development (re: Bellwether and adjacent businesses) has been unsightly architecturally, and view blocking – waterfront should be developed with eye to fitting tone of rest of Bellingham
- Work to get NOAA located here as a primary source of water-related industry employing well-educated, forward thinking people at living wages
- We do not need a boardwalk connecting this redevelopment to Blvd Park as it is totally redundant to the existing South Bay trail – at most, drop this trail closer down to the water but no out on the water at huge expense
- Please do not put a boulevard with a turnaround down to the south end – we don’t need a strip for cars to cruse this beautiful asset
- I really want to see a walkable village where greenspace, businesses, residents, recreation, etc. are well mixed, not separated into chunks
- I like mixture of areas with urban/downtown feel and seclusion
- Have a nice big Ferris wheel – really I’m serious
- Land use – much more public use – less privatization – more even mix
- Use some, or all, of marina space for public use (not just rich folks)
- How about building a huge bridge over the marina, with gathering space open to the public? Think of the skybridge in WWU’s Wilson library, only much bigger – maybe indoor/outdoor
- Primary goal – increase seaport industry and replace lost family wage jobs
- Bellingham has over 40 acres of open space, two times Eugene Oregon – no more is needed – preserve area for industrial jobs
- No assessment given to real clean up of Whatcom Waterway to the extent that the area become a greater focal point for downtown – even including the construction of a new citizen dock, fishing pier, and visitor moorage
- They all have an “over-water connection to Boulevard Park” – I am a sailor and often enjoy anchoring along this part of the shoreline which is lovely and will be ruined by an over-water structure – also this duplicates the South Bay Trail, ruins the view from there and would cost \$6 million plus – Taylor dock is fine, replaces all old pilings, not a duplication
- I like Green Fingers, with the smaller blocks from Green Bank, and an extended loop from Pearl Parks – I’m not stuck on a footbridge across the fairway
- Enhance Wharf Street beach
- Needs gathering places for people/cultures to celebrate the waterfront link with amphitheatre on Central Avenue
- Provide some smaller block areas 250-300 feet square
- Broadway connection to Bellwether
- Connect waterfront to downtown, not just at Laurel Street, but at Commercial or Central
- Why have housing?
- The tissue plant provides jobs
- Maintain the utility of a working waterfront

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

Each neighborhood met as a group and reported issues pertaining specifically to their communities. These comments included:

South Hill

- Do not block views – we paid for those views and want them preserved
- We will meet as a neighborhood to discuss this further
- A question and answer session about the design would be helpful
- When will we know about heights?

Central Business District

- Like visitor moorage
- Keep boat traffic going to the heart of downtown
- Important to have access from downtown to the waterfront
- Do not like the footbridge as it bypasses downtown
- Move the sewer line it is blocking the waterway
- Connectivity to downtown is very important
- Strengthen ties to creek trail
- Include and over-water structure linking downtown to Fairhaven

Lettered Streets

- Need pedestrian access from Lettered Streets to the area
- Include Broadway overlook
- Return connectivity to the waterfront
- Preserve views to the water

Sehome

- Keep the bridge
- Like the Oak Street connection
- Concern over traffic cutting up through the neighborhood, especially on Oak and Laurel
- Concern about trains – both safety and noise – will there be new trains?

Columbia

- Need better pedestrian access
- Need better access from Roeder to the waterfront
- What about an overpass from Broadway park down to the water?