



December 5, 2008

To: Mayor Dan Pike

From: Margaret Norton-Arnold

Re: Summary of Public Meetings

Mayor Pike, thank you for the opportunity to facilitate the four community meetings related to the redevelopment of Bellingham's waterfront. It was a pleasure to work for you and your staff. Today, I am submitting the summaries of those meetings.

In the interest of full transparency, we have tried not to condense the comments too much, and the resulting reports are rather lengthy. As you know, attendance at the meetings was high. While many people shared their perspectives orally at the meetings, numerous others submitted written comments. All of those have also been documented in the meeting summaries.

Here is a very brief synopsis that reflects my reading of the comments:

- Green space remains a high priority. 35 acres is probably the minimum that the community will accept, and several people commented that they would like the park space to be even larger.
- The Port's rotated street grid does have some supporters, and they appreciate the "excitement" the rotated grid might bring to the cityscape. Most of those commenting, however, appear to favor the City's approach through the use of the existing street grid. The preservation of views, "human scale" development and the direct connection with downtown streets are compelling elements for these commentators.
- Most people are also interested in historic preservation, but not at any cost. The general sentiment is to save the buildings for now and take the time to determine if, and how, the buildings on the waterfront site could possibly be preserved. But those commenting also urge prudence, noting that preservation should only be pursued if it is both feasible and cost effective.
- For the most part, commentators want buildings heights to stay on the low side, but they also urge a diversity of building heights. There are particular concerns about buildings of 200 feet being "way too high." Another concern is the existing fill on the site – how can it support tall buildings?
- Transportation is a major issue and concern. Nearly all of those commenting on the transportation elements of the plans want to make certain the waterfront is not too "car centric." People appreciate that both plans allow for numerous modes of transportation.

- A major theme running through several of the comments is the need to prevent “stranded development.” Commentators support the idea of growing from downtown out toward the water. The Bellwether complex is mentioned several times as what *not* to do.

I'm sure that you plan to continue this dialogue with the Bellingham community, and I urge you to do so. As we heard at the meetings, your citizens want you to work with the Port to resolve differences and to establish a Master Plan that truly reflects and encompasses Bellingham's values and visions. I know the community will be eager to hear again from you, and from the Port, when you have made some progress in this regard.

Again, Dan, thank you for the opportunity to facilitate the meetings, and please do not hesitate to give me a call if I can assist in any other way with the planning process.