



Suggestions/Comments/Ideas/Questions

Community Input

Neighborhood Meeting No. 3: August 17, 2004

Roosevelt, Puget, Alabama Hill, Silver Beach, Mt. Baker & Whatcom Falls Neighborhoods
Boys & Girls Club, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

(Note: The following are paraphrased comments from meeting attendees, transcribed from notes and audio taped minutes. Key numbers following each comment indicate policy category(s) assigned for report analysis, see key legend below. Further questions or comments may be addressed to Mr. Greg Aucutt, Senior Planner, City of Bellingham, 360-676-6982, e-mail address: gaucutt@cob.org)

Comments:

- “With regards to the Urban Transect Model, are the T3, T4, and T5 transects in the zoning codes?” ①
- “How would the Urban Transect Model look in Bellingham? Would it be zoned by neighborhood in this T3, T4, and T5 manner?” ①
- “The places that have defined corridors, such as Fairhaven, were largely constructed before the proliferation of the automobile. How can we infill within the City while still acknowledging the need for the automobile?” ①②③
- “I believe that when you have a mish-mash of streets, your sense of place is better defined. Creating street corridors along linear planes does not necessarily establish a better sense of place, but a lack of it. Some confusion in the grid system causes you to identify that you are in a specific area. With a streamlined, connected street system, you lose some of the place identification that you may otherwise have.” ①②
- “Iowa Street, within the Ohio Street Study Area, is pretty much undeveloped. Would development occur at a staggered pace or would developers develop it quickly?” ①
- “Smaller commercial enterprises should be allowed to exist throughout the City. Reducing automobile dependency begins with locating services within walking distance to where people live.” ①②
- “If we are talking about enhancing community, we need to look at what types of commercial enterprises are allowed throughout the City. Drive-thru coffee stands are the perfect example. Though small businesses that provide service to a localized population, they have a definite automotive orientation. If our goal is to increase pedestrian activity within the neighborhoods, our zoning and permit approvals need to reflect that.” ②

- “The major thrust of Bellingham seems to be jobs to the North and residences to the South. We have continuously seen a continuation of this trend as more jobs and services locate near Bellis Fair Mall.” ④
- “This visioning process seems to be focused on the incorporation of a mixture of land-uses in different parts of Bellingham. We should not exclude office spaces within that mixed-use environment we may create. In order to make these ‘centers’ as vital as possible, we need to address the need for populating the areas throughout the day, with a diversity of uses.” ①②
- “Kentucky Street, east of I-5 is as equally underutilized as Ohio Street. Currently, we see a haphazard array of development along Kentucky. This area is ripe for redevelopment. The ROW is already wide enough to allow for sidewalks and other street improvements.” ①②
- “The ‘Neighborhood Centers’ map that we have been presented with today shows many areas that could act as beneficial neighborhood focal points, but there are numerous other opportunities throughout the City for creation of these neighborhood centers.” ①
- “I think there is a need within neighborhood centers to have pedestrian oriented plazas. These could become inviting spaces for public gathering within neighborhood centers.” ①②
- “Planning needs to be done for the longer term than 20 years. Regional planning is vital as the influences of Bellingham on Whatcom County and vice-versa cannot be disregarded. We are not even discussing the carrying capacity of this area, and we need to be.” ①③
- “We need to create places throughout Bellingham that you can walk to. Reducing reliance on the automobile partially lies in accessible services, parks, schools, etc.”
- “The big employers seem to be in specific areas within the City. The two biggest areas are WWU and the industrial area of the Sunnyland/Roosevelt neighborhoods. Most of the retail is in the North, primarily located along the Guide Meridian.” ④
- “We need to make adjustments to accommodate the people moving here. More parks and schools need to be created if we are going to fit more people in the same amount of space. The bussing situation we now see where students cannot attend their neighborhood schools is a prime example of what awaits us in the future if we do not address the need for more local institutions for increased densities.” ①
- “Areas in the UGA should be developed using New Urbanist principles. We need to look very closely, however, at the land supply in the UGA. How much of it is un-buildable? Wetlands abound to the Northwest. We need to design our future growth around environmental accountability that limits the impact to our natural areas which are vital to ecological function.” ①③
- “We need to look into planning on a regional scale. Parcels on the urban fringe present an opportunity: to require developers to set aside land for new schools and parks in addition to the ROW requirements currently in place.” ①③

- “How do we strengthen design control? In a practical sense, where do we begin? In the neighborhood plans, the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, do we go to the City Council? Where do we address the need for design guidelines and how can we make sure that stringent guidelines are adopted?” ②
- “Urban design needs to conform to human scale.” ②
- “Complications arise when you base design review on existing residences within the neighborhoods. You have many styles of houses including Tudor, Craftsman, and Victorian to name a few. With a broad range of designs, how can guidelines be adopted that conform to neighborhood character?” ②
- “SOV usage is not on its way out. With advances in energy supplies, outside that of petroleum, we will not necessarily see a reduction in SOVs. Transit needs to be presented as a viable, convenient alternative to driving. WTA should take a leadership role in the promotion and expansion of service to the most riders and make people choose to get out of their cars. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) should be backed by WTA and undertaken by the City as a way to make transit an attractive alternative to driving. Developers should be required, by the City, to take part in the creation of TODs.” ①③
- “Why aren’t neighborhood centers and infill opportunities being highlighted in the South Neighborhood? There is much vacant land in that area.” ①
- “We should be looking at reinvigorating the Downtown. The J.C. Penny’s building is the perfect example of an unused space that is ripe for reoccupation by a new business. We used to have not only have a J.C. Penny’s, but a Nordstrom’s downtown as well. New, larger, businesses need to be attracted to our downtown, if we are to once again make it a primary shopping destination.” ①
- “The City and County will be focusing on the Yew St. UGA for future growth.” ①③
- “Does growth management differentiate between housing types that must be built? Are there percentages for single-family, multi-family, and duplexes that are required for development?” ①②
- “Do we give up on the Guide Meridian area, and Sunset Square, or can we make these areas more accessible to pedestrians? Can existing ‘Big-Box’ development be made more pedestrian and transit friendly?” ①②③
- “I am surprised at the Barkley Village development. It seems like you have the elements for a main street, but you are lacking one primary component: housing. In the future, developments like Barkley Village should be allowed only if they provide residential land-uses above and commercial land-uses below. I love everything else about that area, but where are the condos/apartments?” ①②
- “There are great examples of mixed-use development in the Juanita (*Kirkland, WA*) area. Buildings are fronted to the sidewalks, residential above commercial, all the things we have talked about. It is a very vibrant community, and can become an example of mixed-use development done right.” ②

- “If current buildings are to be retrofitted to accommodate housing above, how do we convince current businesses that losing out on money, during the construction phase, would be beneficial to them? Even if the long-term prospects are good, are they likely to comply if they are losing out on a substantial amount of money in the short-term?” ❷
- “Market forces should guide and promote mixed-use development. We have heard from various people how appealing it is. Why isn’t it happening now?” ❶❷
- “The City could inform lenders about the desirability of mixed-use development and about the potential for a substantial return.” ❷
- “Finding financing for the new building on the old site of the Flame Tavern was difficult. Now that this building has been completed, lenders can see the economic viability for this type of development. Lenders should be looking at how desirable these type of buildings are, even if there are few examples around Bellingham.” ❷
- “An option for creating public amenities could be through a Sales Tax Overlay Zone. These areas would collect a slightly higher tax rate for goods and services, and the money accrued would go back into providing trails and water features in the areas in which the extra tax money was collected. This way, the City avoids having to use bonding or using the existing tax base to provide such amenities. An example of this sort of system working is in the Costco area along the Guide Meridian.” ❶❷
- “Any sales tax increases to pay for public amenities would disproportionately affect low-income range people over high-income range people. Taxes that create this type of impact are unfair.” ❷

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Key legend:

The following categories were formulated following review of public input to aid analysis and guide policy recommendations for client agencies. See associated comments from all neighborhood meetings, Drop-in Center, and Planning Fair, tabulated results document in Forum report appendix:

- ❶ = **“Building Community”** - *Comments related to improved or new civic infrastructure, supporting community values*
- ❷ = **“Development and Design Control”** - *Comments related to regulating new development in accord with community values*
- ❸ = **“Inter-organizational Coordination”** - *Comments related to civic and regulatory agency coordination, affecting growth and development*
- ❹ = **Other** - *Comments unrelated to primary categories*