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Dear Waterfront Futures Group

Tourism and industrial facilities need not be seen as conflicting uses. When I travel, I find industrial properties to be some of the most interesting places to visit. The cheese factory, in Tillamook, Oregon comes to mind. Another example is the Corning Glass Museum. It's associated with Corning Glassworks in New York State. Power plants, at some of our Hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River, have been favorite places to visit; especially Grand Coulee Dam. This is a lot more interesting than just another bunch of knickknack shops.

I admit that my visit to Grand Coulee was before the Sept. 11 security restrictions there. I hear they are working to figure out ways for accommodating tourism still.

Our waterfront offers several opportunities where industry can enhance tourism, but not much is being done to take advantage of this.

When thinking about development of the old pulp mill site, this is what comes to mind. Industrial uses border, and sort of cut off, the pulp mill site from downtown Bellingham. There is the power plant to the east and the paper mill to the north. Port operations box it in from the south.

Rather than seeing these things as barriers, or hopping that they, someday, will go away, let's see if we can integrate them into a visitor friendly waterfront. Maybe these businesses could do more to showcase their activities. One could enjoy looking through picture windows into the machinery of the power plant from a jogging trail that connects downtown to the pulp mill property, for instance.

Historic signs, along the South Bay Trail, to Boulevard Park, depict things like old coal mines and rail lines. Can't we also use signs to recognize things that are still in use?

Industries can be seen as educational resources. I just read that there is a proposal to "home port" some research ships in Bellingham. This idea

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could fit well into a working and educational waterfront.

I don't see a lot of future for new retailing in quite a while at least. Whatcom County seems to have a glut of retailing already. We need to figure out businesses that can bring new money into the local area, rather than just recycle existing dollars. The Herald once said Whatcom County has more drive up coffee places, per capita, than any other county in the state. There are also many knickknack shops in the area, plus places like Laconner and Port Townsend. It would be nice to do something more unique.

Waterfront housing could be part of the mix. It seems like housing brings outside money into the local economy if it becomes a retirement destination. It can also be a place for people who work on the internet thus tapping a larger market than just "over saturated Whatcom County."

Industry and Technology can create exciting art. I think Georgia Pacific's old chipper blade is sitting, neglected, in a recycling yard on West Holly St. near Base Camp Sporting goods store. Couldn't that be used as a sculpture in some development of the GP site?

See photo of chipper blade here
www.theslowlane.com/bhaminfo/chipper.html

Downtown Bellingham has the Radio Museum with its time line of technology in the window. We also have the Maritime Heritage Center. GP's old site, and the rest of the waterfront, offers a lot of recreational, educational, industrial and residential opportunity. If these things succeed, some retail will be able to have a market to function as well.

