

Waterfront Futures Group
“Talking up the Waterfront - City Center” Summary of Comments
October 8, 2003

Art Anderson, Facilitator, Paul Leuthold Scribe

Character, Uses & Design

- Waterfront connection to CBD complements Downtown
- Trolley can be used as a transportation link
- Need public access
- Kayak launch (Wharf St. Beach)
- Park – water access
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- High Density Housing (mixed use)
- Retain some old buildings for character
- Sense of authenticity

Access

- Kayak launch needed
- Trail connecting around bay including a portion of ASB that will potentially be filled
- Walking/ biking opportunities
- No dead ends on trail system
- Walkway/ bike promenade over Whatcom Waterway
- Bike lane along border (shoreline?)

Environmental Quality

- (From post-it) Restoration of shallow water habitat. Need to create shallow water habitat. 5:1 slope like Landau consulting has proposed for part of Bellingham Bay project. (see illustration)
- Foot of Cornwall kayak launch
- DNR property – needs cleanup and slope more gradually
- Rip rap removal from W. Pine St. and slope gradually
- If industrial use is chosen for the site, it should be conscious of noise
- Can Encogen be made more attractive or disguised in some way?
- Any industry that remains should be made more attractive
- The tissue mill should concentrate on elimination of odors
- Greenspace should be incorporated into the area (terrace gardens to soften industrial buildings)
- Terrace gardens will become an element of industrial buildings
- No high rise buildings

Jobs and Economic Development

- No garages, long term storage (use will be restricted to businesses that enhance the area)
- High density housing with height restrictions

- Restaurants
- Marine-related (repair/ sales) creates ambiance
- Tourism – small cruise ships, eco-tourism
- Corporate headquarters (NOAA)
- Multiple Users (multiple use?)
- High tech
- University Use
- Attract businesses that are currently near the airport
- Introduce a grocery store (market) to the area
- Introduce a fish co-op, or a farmers fish market

Public Process

- Most comprehensive effort yet
- If public perceive that their suggestions were ignored it would spell doom for the Port and City
- G-P (and other property owner) plans must align w/ WFG process
- Web site should include a calendar of events
- Take a display board to library that attracts public attention
- Place maps of the planning area in waterfront restaurants

Doug Starcher Facilitator, David Roberts Scribe

Environmental Quality

- Make more beaches
- See more typical sandstone beaches (like Teddy Bear Cove)
- Re-establish natural beach systems
- Concept of sustainability should be part of all plans
- Remove as much filled areas as possible from historical tidelands
- Roeder/ Chestnut viaduct is environmental barrier: blocks Whatcom Creek from the bay. Sewer trunk and the bridge.
- Divert a portion of G-P's water supply to fish hatchery in order to protect against spills that kill fish
- Add more landscaping and continue to cleanup and fix sidewalks

Jobs and Economic Development

- Anything toxic - chemical plants, tissue plants, pulp mills, cogeneration plant should be phased out
- Bring a rope maker – a clean industry – to the waterfront
- Prime real estate may discourage business development
- Look at the value of the land (highest and best use), but also balance with public amenities
- Keep some aspects of the working waterfront
- Think about how to grow small businesses
- Amenities make this an attractive place. Labor pool in nice places.
- Have a plan that deliberately retains some industrial uses, while promoting other uses.

- Contiguous access on big boardwalks is not attractive.
- Address process and consider possibility that the site will be too toxic.
- Maintain presence of fishing industry
- Need another good seafood restaurant

Character, Uses and Design

- Tourist support facilities
- Public access to the waterfront
- Beach or park
- Gateway to San Juans – ferry, boating (moorage, transitional destination, access for non-motorized, kayaks, sailboats)
- Should not look like Portland or Tacoma (not cookie cutter) not just a destination
- Design and build for the long-haul – “enduring” will look good in 100 years
- Complement Downtown with waterfront development
- High-end residential in waterfront area
- Do we have a “signature?” do we want to build on it?
- Grow something that is *us*. Represents Bellingham and comes from Bellingham – indigenous. Educational facilities – an “Educational Epicenter,” sustainable food sources
- (From post-it): Be *bold* in planning and visioning. Don’t be limited to what other communities have done.
- Should be an effort to rezone some other areas around Bellingham to preserve industrial space if this is not going to be industrial.
- Shipping channel could be used by cruise lines, etc.
- Don’t model Bellingham after others – make it come from this process.
- (From post-it) Bring the “Big Ole” steam whistle to the waterfront.

Access

- (From post-it) Walking connections all along the waterfront
- Gondola from Arboretum to WWU and the waterfront
- Vacating rail Right of Way
- Integrate RR into concept of working waterfront
- Incorporate historical aspects of RR into scene
- Integrate R – look at ways for pedestrian and vehicle access to the area; make the train part of the waterfront scene.
- Will need additional vehicle access
- Trolley up past college and into Downtown
- Guest moorage around Citizen’s Dock
- Travel to the water should be a journey and should be interesting. Wharf St. to Ivy features a lot of tree cover (a good thing)

Public Process

- (From post-it) Feature prizes
- (From post-it) Include an online survey on the website
- Public may not understand the advertisement in the paper – could describe it better
- People need to take the Herald to get WFG info
- Send out announcements sooner

- Work through existing networks for outreach (Renaissance folks) – this will target people who are looking for this type of information
- Blend of design guidelines and Design Review Board
- Forums like this are the best way – it gets people excited
- Pictures will be helpful
- Post card was helpful. Word of mouth is more effective
- Make people feel invested, and keep people involved. Avoid train wrecks – make what we are doing count
- Feel empowered, helpful information by coming to public meetings. Nice to know that you can contribute.
- What happens to the information gathered at this process?
- What level of empowerment will the WFG have?

Chris Morgan Facilitator, Jori Burnett Scribe

Jobs and Economy

- Create jobs from cleanup.
- Why are there still so many vacant buildings in the CBD?
- There is no plan for the Central Business District
- Retail should consist of small, locally owned specialty shops
- The waterfront should be affordable to “regular” people
- Are service jobs desirable?
- Small local ownership is desirable
- The waterfront is very valuable, but we need to make sure that the value of the waterfront doesn't skyrocket
- There are few decent-paying jobs in Bellingham
- There have never been jobs in this community
- Market forces act against small business – the margins are too small
- Market forces do not act against small businesses – they can survive
- Bellingham should provide an incentive for public lands
- A successful, attractive waterfront will benefit the CBD
- People live in Bellingham for the quality of life – people are willing to forgo money
- Our economy must be willing to compete with other areas for jobs
- College students are a benefit to the economy – studies have shown that college student jobs drag the economy down, but they actually help it
- A Research center could attract hi tech, large employers.
- Who is paying for the development?
- There are a lot of well-off people in Bellingham – they just don't work here
- Property values shouldn't be driven up
- NOAA is a good employer, but it doesn't really produce anything

Access

- G-P is a major obstacle to linkages
- A trolley along the waterfront is desirable
- The waterfront should be public property – who owns it now? (map provided)

- There needs to be an affordable transportation link – trolleys, water taxis, etc. linking the CBD to Fairhaven
- One way streets need to be re-thought
- There is currently little access to the waterfront
- Bellingham Technical College has some interesting access points
- There are few places to go on the waterfront with the exception of the Wharf St. Beach
- People should be able to walk to and from the waterfront from the CBD.
- A trolley could run along the existing trolley tracks

Environmental Quality

- Will we ever be able to swim in the Bay
- How will we be able to remediate the hard edge?
- How much of the edge is fill – how do we restore nature when it has been changed so much?
- You can combine urban and natural features (habitat)
- The Seattle waterfront is beautiful
- A research center could actually make money from the cleanup
- WWU could include their marine research on the waterfront, or could move a law department Downtown
- How damaged is the bay?

Public Process

- The meeting had good turnout, mostly as a result of the cards and the newspaper
- The City or Port can use public subsidies to decrease property cost, but it limits resale value
- How will redevelopment occur? What are the steps?
- Will landowners sell to developers?
- Local developers should be used
- There should be standards – a certain percentage of workers (construction) should be local
- There is a lot of local expertise at WWU, WCC, BTC
- Non-profit developers have access to subsidies, grants that for-profits don't

Character, Uses and Design

- Big development can occur without huge amounts of parking
- Parking should be located underground, or at the fringes of the city. Non-SOV transportation in the central city should be the rule
- An “innovative” shared-car system could work
- In 50 years, people should live and work in the same area – little need for cars.
- A lot of people would benefit from not depending on cars
- Housing on the waterfront should be “acceptable”
- The waterfront should be an aesthetically pleasing environment – not necessarily including more parks
- The waterfront is and will be an urban area, and people must accept that.
- Development on the waterfront should be affordable
- Affordability must be ensured – it should be zoned into the area

- There should be good walking spaces on the environment, including good retail shops
- Parks can link areas together
- The area has a certain carrying capacity that shouldn't be exceeded
- The city could be a model for other cities, in terms of living and working in the same place
- Should the focus of the Central Business District still be commercial? Yes, but with residential as well
- Inevitably, all cities will sprawl out and downtowns will be snarled.
- There is a parking myth in Bellingham. Parking is not the issue
- There needs to be parking lots on the waterfront
- The CBD is experiencing a "natural evolution" as small specialty shops are replacing large department stores.
- However, this "natural evolution" attracts people, which is followed by a rise in rents
- The waterfront should be an extension of Downtown
- The waterfront should feature mixed use/ new urbanism ideals – residential development above commercial development
- There is a lack of affordable housing, and the term affordable housing has bad connotations (affordable = attainable by regular people, not necessarily subsidized)
- Diversity downtown is important
- Squalicum Harbor is struggling right now. It is disconnected, there is little access to it, and it is not affordable
- There is no or little access from the City Center to the waterfront
- Grocery stores are needed Downtown and/or in the waterfront
- Instead of grocery stores, "European style" markets would be desirable – get what you need for the night
- Elementary schools will be required if there is density on the waterfront
- There are two CBD nodes that are particularly healthy – the Stewarts Coffee node and the Railroad Avenue node
- A neighborhood on the waterfront could be created around a large employer
- Something like NOAA is a desirable neighbor, something like Microsoft is not
- There is no where to go to sit Downtown
- Want to keep Bellingham how it is right now, but the community is stuck with no jobs and an ugly waterfront
- The Downtown waterfront should be high density, but other parts of the waterfront should be low density
- Bellingham Towers should be the absolute height limit in Bellingham
- In Old Town, the maximum height should be lower. Density is good, but high rises are bad.
- Heights aren't the problem – unimaginative, ugly buildings are
- Aesthetically pleasing designs can make higher buildings more acceptable
- Potential (and often overlooked) historic buildings should be protected and improved, e.g. overlooked apartments between B'ham Towers/ library
- The apartments discussed above, Bellingham Hardware building, other buildings are good models of attractive development that could be repeated on the waterfront
- G-P is part of the history of the community – some structures should be preserved in a Gasworks-style park or museum.

- Some G-P buildings are big and could be adapted for other uses, possibly even residential
- It's sometimes cheaper to tear down old buildings than to "fix" them.
- Lots of open space along State Street
- Services need to be close to residential development
- A boardwalk or promenade could be good
- Buildings should be located fairly close to the edge, but there should be places for recreation – places to eat lunch, whether through picnic spaces or buying it and eating it at a store.
- The purpose of the development should be the guide for development – the purpose should be to maintain the local lifestyle
- Comprehensive design is desirable
- The future of the waterfront could be compared to Lakeshore Drive in Chicago, with a ribbon of motor transport, followed by a pedestrian/ public space corridor, and finally, the waterfront.
- There could be 3-4 good sized structures along a stretch of the waterfront, with broad open spaces between them and few roads.
- Office facilities, mixed use, etc.
- Vail, Co. is a very nice city, but no one that lives there can work there.
- Design should be w/ the Bellingham community in mind
- There are and will be a clash of generations in B'ham – retirees and students
- What impact will houseboats have

John Macpherson Facilitator, Sheila Hardy Scribe

Access

- Bowl shape (of the bay) makes access quick
- Parking structures should be within a few blocks of the water
- Alternative transportation is not viable – people in cars
 - Plans should be developed for today's people
 - Affordable mass transit does have benefits
 - Workers are located Downtown
 - Don't want the waterfront to be dominated by parking
- Bluff above G-P is a challenge – opening the bluff up is a big challenge
- Railroad is a big challenge as well
- Central Avenue and Laurel Street can be opened
- Linkages across waterways
- What happens at Cornwall landfill, marine terminal (boat access opportunity at Cornwall landfill)
- Bridge from State Street to a parking garage in the vicinity of the Cornwall Ave landfill
- Boardwalk over water
- What is the ownership at S. end of Cornwall Ave?
- Can't keep people out of the waterfront
- Growth should be self-sustaining
- Not tourism based – tourism should be a component but not the focus
- Good jobs are key
- Need access to the town from water

- Bellingham is a good location between Vancouver and Seattle
- Demand will come if it's what people want
 - More marina
 - Human scale
 - Pedestrian access
 - Linkages
- A light rail/ trolley/ shuttle transportation system would be good – creative transportation planning
- There is currently limited access
- Vancouver features viewing workplaces for pedestrians, tours of industry
- Access to the water with boats is limited
- G-P limits opportunity to walk the entire waterfront – big economic \$'s

Character, Uses and Design

- Clusters – entertainment and otherwise exist now – Fairhaven and marina
- Industrial clusters are not so good for people
- Can we sustain ourselves now? Do we need a new vision?
 - Vision should be authentic
- Fishing not a very friendly use
- Reuse structures rather than retain historical uses
- Industrial uses are actually smaller than many think – they can be integrated
- Can covenants be used? This requires community involvement to keep a healthy and safe atmosphere.
- Waterfront should be bright, clean, well lit, well policed
- Bellingham should be an “18 hour” town
- Downtown should be more of a neighborhood
- Land value on the waterfront influences the class of use
- Community should build infrastructure to support a big vision.
- Old Town neighborhood is an opportunity area
 - History attracts people
 - Structures can be re-created
 - Residential areas are a must
- Parks, walking along the waterfront
- Easy transitions between areas – tiers or rings, i.e. districts within for walking
- Varying identities between districts (i.e. housing or shopping)
- Industry can hurt Downtown's image – better at the edge
- Development should be people-oriented – there should be walkways if there's industry
- Various types of industry are good – some exist within walls, thus a lower risk
- G-P tissue mill will operate in the foreseeable future (at least 5 years)
- Absorption fates for G-P – properties could be long, shorter if mixed use
- Cluster model – industry, co-gen – friendly to other uses
- Place where residents can stay and children can stay and work
- Shouldn't be a large urban area
- Value the current values
- Due to proximity of I-5 and the flat land, the area will be more urban
- How should the growth be directed?

- Development should identify with the cohesive whole – shouldn't be clustered
- Water related uses, including Fisherman's Wharf
- ASB should be shrunk and used for disposal
- Whatcom Waterway sediment could be filled
- ASB/ other areas will be developed when sediments and soil meet standards
- Potential marina for ASB is more complex economically
- Would establishing a marina in the future elsewhere be feasible? 20 year process for development
- Tissue Warehouse is currently at full capacity, trucked
- Some product brought in by rail at G-P
- Which character should be retained?
 - Not mines
 - Logs in the bay are ok
 - Fishery – Bellingham could be a center for processing, mostly for farmed fish. People are eating more and more fish
- Most expensive to get and process wood
 - Energy costs
 - Spotted owl/ environmental considerations

Jobs and Economic Development

- Waterfront/ Downtown is the nexus of activity – it is a historical model that can be repeated.
- Diversity, multiple uses can allow flow and change for varying conditions
- Full measure and balance of social, economic environmental values
- Development should last over 50 years and the people should still be proud – the right elements should be chosen
- Development has to be real
- Some industries should remain on the waterfront – they are attractive because they are genuine
- Potential for jobs and economic development could be huge
- Tourists, tax base
- Topography, bay surrounded, relatively calm vs. open ocean
- Jobs should recognize need for public water access
- Site has access to train, water
- Transportation is critical
- 1500 additional jobs could be created through mixed use
 - Could create \$600 million in revenues to City
- Railroad is an obstacles to access to the waterfront
 - There could be easy solutions – moving the mainline out and using the old Milwaukee RR line
- South Hill above State Street should be funicula (?)
- Need remote parking to avoid problems on the G-P site when it is being redeveloped

Environmental Quality

- Environmental issues should be codified
- New projects should meet or exceed standards

- Habitat restoration should include shallow slopes (not bulkheads)
 - These shallow slopes are better for access right up along the water
- Human-scale leads to more green, more trees, etc.
- Central core leads itself to landscape
- Natural transitions
- Green buildings could act as a barrier unless the rules are widely applied

Public Process

- Specialty presentation informative
- People are accessible through email list
- Channel 10 is good in lieu of being at meetings
- It is good that property owners are included
- Talking to waterfront businesses is critical
- Good flow of information
- Outside presentations
- Two people are attending their first meeting – outreach and mailer are good

John Blethen Facilitator, John Coleman Scribe

Character, Uses & Design

- Waterfront walkway from Fairhaven as far North as possible
- Light transport along proposed railway (personal transport)
- Move heavy rail inland
- Vancouver to Portland commuter rail line
- Connectivity from Downtown to water – make it so one will not be able to tell that the waterfront was once disconnected from Downtown
 - Continue city street grid system to waterfront
- Mixed use waterfront, minus heavy industry
- Keep large vessel activity in area
- Maintain small boat ambiance
- Maintain architectural style of older downtown
- Save older buildings in area
- Maritime museum
- Houseboats/ water-based living
- Waterfront condos behind access corridor
- Architectural reviews of development
- Remove cogeneration plant

Access

- Day/ night use visitors docks behind Squilicum Harbor
- Give visitors access to Downtown via boat
- Boat launch at end of C Street
- Bury sewer pipe so smaller boats can access beneath Holly Street
- Walkable waterfront from at least Fairhaven North as far as possible
- Parking should be hidden
- Make sure that waterfront visitors do not use Downtown business parking

- Better pedestrian link from post office to waterfront
- Better linkage to urban areas

Jobs & Economic Development

- One large key tenant (business) to center waterfront development (some disagreement)
- Farmers market could be moved, or the current market could be expanded
- Fish market
- Not interested in large-scale shipping
- Remove co-generation facility
- Follow Granville Island in Vancouver
 - Coffee roasters, hotels – mixed use
- Keep the railroad station
 - Old Town – antique industry could be amplified
 - Make Old Town a top-notch antique area
- Aquarium/ Discovery Center

Environmental Quality

- Create/ restore beach areas
 - End of Cornwall and I& J waterway, South end of Landfill, end of C street, end of Hilton Avenue
- Storm water should be mitigated properly
- Educational area – bring school children down to waterfront and show them a properly restored wetland/ aquarium to demonstrate fish life and pollution hazards, tie in to “Snow Goose” or something like it
- Let developers know that their concerns are being addressed. Let them know that the public has agreed upon the plan ahead of the developer so there is no uphill battle

Public Process

- Hold an essay contest for kids’ views
- Establish a monthly newsletter for Downtown
- Once plans are officially announced, then a lot of feedback will occur

Lydia Bennett Facilitator, Maureen Camandona Scribe

Character, Uses and Design

- Current landscape was not planned with design in mind
- Include more murals by Lanny Little
- Development should have 3 levels
 - Business, pubs, shops on 1st floor
 - Living spaces, condos
 - Everything faces the waterfront
- Include visitor attractions, shops, retail support buildings
- The waterfront is the focal point of the city
- Even industry can blend into overall design theme – integrate buildings – such as the Co-Gen plant – into design

- (From post-it) Development should have a historical theme
- Preserve, adapt and reuse historic buildings – no need to obliterate industrial buildings
- Don't forget residents – development shouldn't be just for visitors
- Don't "block off" waterfront
- Would like to see a "touch tank"
- Possible theme: emphasize the history of the area – wood and brick buildings)
- Design of the Bellwether buildings are warehouse-like
- Can't see water from the road
- How will development work with the railroad?
- What examples exist of tunnels, overpasses, etc. that incorporate a RR with waterfront development?
- White Rock – filled in the area between RR and waterfront – well done
- Are we going to save the RR terminal (we should)
- Cautions not to take advantage of unique look and feel of marine environment
- What do we mean by marine- related use – concept should be expanded to include industry that enhances peoples' experience of the waterfront
- A trolley could be used for transportation
- New construction should have underground parking or park and rides with access via streetcar
- Plenty of pedestrian walkways
- Should be able to walk from Fairhaven to northern terminus
- Create dual use walkway by purchasing part of the RR ROW
- Build a well-designed pedestrian bridge from Broadway/ Eldridge to waterfront (across RR switch station)
- Relocate RR yard – possibly to airport site
- Possible land swaps w/ city – boardwalk / pier through industrial zones, connect to trail
- G-P property will meet environmental standards for mixed use
- City should listen to Old Town residents – "unlimited" height limits are unreasonable

Access

- (From post-it) Keep paths user friendly
- (From post-it) More pedestrian and less auto access
- Living near saltwater is an intangible – some attractions can't be defined – must be able to be close to water
- Part of access is the *design* of the access
- Got to have mass transit
- Discourage SOV travel
- Bluff makes it difficult to create access for cars
- Monorail
- Businesses along waterfront could encourage vanpool/ carpool
- Pedestrian oriented
- Subways
- Streetcars are what built small towns – fits the theme, potential to draw tourists
- Pedestrian access
- Small-gauge rail operation

Economic Development

- Invite the industries being “kicked out” of Everett’s waterfront to relocate
- Convention center with hotels, restaurants and shops
- Look for business that will provide living wages
- Ensure that businesses do not deteriorate the environment
- Would like to see oceanic industries (safe, sheltered place for oceanography)
- Salmon smoking center (years ago, this was the salmon smoking capital of the world)
- Incorporate as a theme: the importance of salmon
- Environment, beauty – great place to retire – don’t want this to become a tourist town. Jobs in healthcare, culture, community are good
- Don’t want a smokestack industry community either
- Mixed use – hotels, industry
- WWU, BTC and WCC could be involved in reviving the fishing boating industry
- Design industry into the project. Don’t lose any existing industry
- Concentrate industry near existing industry
- Plan must include a lot of flexibility – we don’t know what may be coming 10, 20 or 50 years from now
- Living wage jobs can come from multiple industries (health care, university, oceanography, etc.)
- Maximize proximity to VAN and SEA

Environmental Quality

- Don’t do anything to make the environment worse
- Harbor seals and bald eagles should be protected

Public Process

- Get an implementation mechanism to work in tandem with the planning process – City, Port and stakeholders
- Many meeting have been during working hours – hard to attend. Evening meetings are good
- Bellingham was once designated an “All American City,” in part because of our public process. Should have an historian document this process. No one can say “Why wasn’t I involved.” And the city can show how much public participation took place
- Easy to find out about meetings
- Invitation in the mail was effective
- Look forward to hearing from architects