

March 13, 2003

Waterfront Futures Project
1801 Roeder Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

Subject: Suggested Light Industrial Area

Thank you for providing a glimpse of the exciting Waterfront Futures Project during the public meeting on March 5th. I found the evening very informative and commend you for beginning this project with input from the public.

As the owner of a small manufacturing business, I am currently faced with the decision to relocate my business. From this search comes an idea which I feel could be logically and successfully incorporated into the redevelopment of the present waterfront industrial area.

Many of us who operate small manufacturing businesses find a scarcity of available facilities at a reasonable lease rate. Many of the buildings which are in light manufacturing zoned areas are filled with businesses that are not light manufacturing businesses. I am sure that many of those tenants locate in light manufacturing areas to avoid the higher rents of office buildings and retail spaces. Often when small manufacturers do find available space we are often faced with conflicts of activity that would be "disruptive" to those non-manufacturing businesses. Another challenge which faces many small manufacturing businesses, especially those of a craft nature, is that very little walk-in traffic can be generated in most light industrial settings.

Thus, a unique opportunity exists in the Waterfront Futures Project. I propose that a portion of the redeveloping industrial area be developed for shop/showroom areas where small manufacturers could both create products as well as generate significant sales thanks to the close proximity of downtown, the Farmer's Market and the tourist facilities and ensuing tourist traffic which are likely to develop. I visualize a "village" of craftsmen.....a part of the Whatcom County heritage. An additional aspect might be to develop this area as a "business incubator" area for small manufacturing businesses, possibly with guidance from the SBDC at Western Washington University. Many successful incubator models are available as examples.

Small business is the core and vitality of Whatcom County's economy. Including space for small manufacturing businesses and assisting them to thrive would be a very appropriate and compatible use for a portion of the area to be redeveloped. I would be pleased to further expand on these ideas at your request.

Sincerely,
Garden Arches

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Owner

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