

CONNECTING BELLINGHAM TO THE BAY

Reflections on the April 23rd WFG Work Session

The Vision Plan

- Consider changing the banner to “Connecting Bellingham With the Bay.”¹
- Display an image on the cover that will depict the essence of the vision.²
- Use a small version of the image as an icon to affect continuity throughout.
- Reverse the main inside caption to read “Our Vision: Values and Goals.”³
- Include in the statement of the overriding principle language indicating that public process is as indispensable to achieving our vision as to enjoying it.⁴
- Include the concept of shoreline stewardship in the statement of principle.
- Include the marine-related focus of the vision in the principle statement.⁵
- Include cultural and social elements in the principle statement.⁶
- Include both Native Americans and other ethnic groups in our respect for and representation of culture.
- Rearrange the listing of goals under Access and Transportation giving priority to those with a pedestrian orientation followed by the boat and vehicular items.

- Review the listings of goals under the other three elements to ensure that they are also appear in logical order.

¹ The process of connecting Bellingham to the Bay is nothing new! It has been underway for 150 years! It is reflected by railroad trestles, landfills and piers placed in the bay to facilitate the extraction of natural resources with little regard for the bay itself, for its shoreline or for its natural systems. Consequently, the public has developed a widespread sense of separation from the water. If we intend to make a radical change in our relationship with the bay, we must exercise much greater responsibility for its well-being as we seek to increase our enjoyment of it. To better reflect our commitment, we might revise our banner to read “Reconnecting Bellingham With the Bay.”

² A vision is experienced not as language but as an image. “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

³ This would focus our vision and avoid the definitional debate over “objectives” and “goals”

⁴ Public Process was originally one of the five WFG elements. We should not lose sight of it as we emphasize the remaining four. It is essential to achieving the desired outcomes associated with each of them. Our citizens will be greatly encouraged to find public process at the center of the Vision Plan.

⁵ Marine-related includes any environmentally responsible use that encourages, facilitates and enhances public access to the water and/or that moves toward recovering the original state of the shoreline and its natural systems. Uses that derive more value from being on the waterfront than they contribute to it should be prohibited. Uses which are not water dependent but which contribute to the ambiance, understranding and enjoyment of the water front should be retained and encouraged.

⁶ Sense of place emanates from social and cultural activities, i.e., the lifestyle of the local population, as well as from natural settings and architectural attributes.

The Framework Plan

- Balance the importance of views of the water from the city with views of the bay from the shore.
- Include as many bi-nodal linkages as possible to provide destinations attracting people to move both to and from the water and along the water on both levels.
- Make the transitions between destination points as conscious as possible, especially those which traverse the bluff, to reinforce the sense of place generated by each one and to achieve continuity.⁷
- Place an icon at each destination point to provide visual appeal and continuity.
- Design the icons with a common motif to reinforce continuity.
- Place a map and/or a sign at each destination point so visitors will know where they are and where they may go from there.

⁷ Continuity of design may be optimized by making spatial adjustments that evoke distinct, vivid and memorable experiences. We will be successful in enhancing our sense of place to the extent that people remember not only what they encountered in visiting the Bellingham waterfront but how they felt during each encounter. Continuity (or integration) of design is more experiential than architectural.