

September 1, 2004

Waterfront Futures  
PO Box 1677  
Bellingham WA 98227

Dear Waterfront Futures Committee;

Thank you for the ongoing opportunity to comment on the Waterfront Futures plans as they take shape. It's a pleasure to note that the June 24 Framework Plan update incorporates some beneficial changes, particularly from an environmental standpoint. However, I believe that a few important changes remain to be made.

The overall vision for the Bellingham waterfront ought best to put environmental sustainability first; it is our most important resource over the long haul. Individual businesses and industries will come and go, as we are seeing, but by maintaining a clean, healthy waterfront environment, we'll always have the basis for drawing to us the "next thing".

On page 5 of the Framework Plan, Guiding Principles, under "Restore the Health of Land and Water", item #6 says, "Tailor environmental strategies and remediation to planned use." I read this to mean, "Do the minimum cleanup necessary in the short-term." This is a short-sighted strategy which could be costly over time. If we do only the remediation necessary for a use being proposed today, what will happen 20 or 50 years from now when a different and perhaps more sensitive use is wanted? Will another, more costly, cleanup project need to be undertaken? The more we clean up now, the fewer problems we'll encounter in the future and the greater flexibility we'll have in further planning. Again, if we make our waterfront as clean and healthy as possible, we'll maximize our options.

Eelgrass beds are present south of the opening to I & J Waterway, and they need to be protected. The presence of a kayak launch on the pocket beach northeast of the eelgrass would encourage unnecessary boat traffic through there. The put-in proposed for the other side of the tissue warehouse would be quite sufficient.

Our area possesses a huge potential for adventure-based ecotourism, which we should encourage. It's a growing industry, it's cleaner and more sustainable than consumption-based tourism, and it attracts into our midst people with energy and ideas. A white paper submitted to you early this year proposed tying Bellingham in with the regional Marine Trail system by providing a kayak facility in Fairhaven. I heartily endorse this idea. The boat launch just west of Padden Lagoon could be designated for the use of human-

powered craft (enhancing protection of the lagoon), including dinghies from the transient boats anchored offshore. There could be an on-shore facility with kayak lockers (something currently needed by local users) and showers. With the attractions of Fairhaven at hand, this could be a nice non-motorized vacation destination.

Padden Lagoon should be protected and enhanced further than what is proposed. The lagoon should be enlarged on the east side by removing fill, the shoreline naturalized, and a park strip placed behind it of sufficient dimension to provide real protection to the lagoon from the industrial activity to the east.

On page 2 of the Framework Plan, bullet #8 of the Introduction states, "The best of our waterfront must be reserved for the benefit of our entire community." In that light, I ask that you reconsider the plan for the GP site in regard to public park space. The current plan shows three pocket parks, essentially surrounded by buildings. This is completely insufficient to the needs of the area. There are several condo and apartment projects going up just upland of this spot. The people you wish to attract to occupy these units, especially families, will expect, need, and deserve a nearby park space big enough to actually do something. It should be at least the size of Elizabeth Park and it should be open to the water, facing the Bay. I suggest putting it east of Pine Street, incorporating the currently proposed park nearest there and extending northwest to the GP log pond and southwest to Pine Street. WWU could be allotted the strip between Commercial and Cornwall down to Pine and part of the area north and northwest of there currently marked for mixed use. This would give them some waterfront access, but not ALL of the bayside waterfront. The rectangular park facing the Whatcom Creek waterway could be reduced in size to provide more mixed use area.

Thanks for your consideration of these ideas.

Sincerely,

Eileen Herring  
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