

To the Waterfront Futures Group

September 28, 2004

Congratulations on winning the APA award! I look forward to joining the celebration at the meeting on the 29th.

Just for the record, here is a summary of my key thoughts to date, most of which have been submitted previously.

1. The WFG scope needs to be expanded to include the entire Bay and its watershed. This would officially involve the County, the Lummis, the Nooksacks and the area's major institutions. We should be about connecting the entire region with the bay, not just the City of Bellingham.
2. The WFG focus needs to be sharpened. While the slogan "Connecting the Region with the Bay" identifies the intended process it lacks value-oriented content. We have the opportunity of providing a world-class waterfront experience, rivaling the South of France and the Dalmatian Coast. We need a banner like "Creating a North Coast Rivera."
3. The WFG structure needs to be grounded in the various planning sectors. Five Southside Neighborhood Organizations have joined together for the purpose of implementing the WFG recommendations for the waterfront south of the CBD. Similar groups should be encouraged to form in the other sectors.
4. One of the major elements of the "North Coast Rivera" should be a multi-cultural enclave like the Algerian Kasbah or the Parisian Left Bank, where all of our cultural groups can establish businesses purveying their respective traditions, whether, food, hand craft, art, music or dance. The area I envision for this cluster of retail establishments (with housing above) is the former Uniflite site. Creating a multi-lingual welcome sign on the dry dock at the Fairhaven Shipyard would get us moving in this direction as an item of "low hanging fruit." Creating a park between the FMIP and Reid Boilerworks devoted to multi-cultural celebrations would keep up the momentum. In both projects, the local cultural groups should be deeply involved.
5. The recommendation of the Waterfront Center consultants that we create an all-weather public gathering place on or near the waterfront should be added to the final WFG recommendations. We may need two of these, one in the CBD and one in Fairhaven. In the latter case, the ideal site is on Mill Ave. opposite the Fairhaven Green so that activities held there during pleasant weather could be held in a visually-connected indoor venue when the weather is inclement.

I hope you will agree that these items are worthy of inclusion in the final WFG report.

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