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DRAFT COMMENTS

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RE: Comments From Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Upon the  
June 8<sup>th</sup> 2004 Waterfront Framework – Connecting Bellingham with the Bay  
Guiding Principles and Recommendations

Overall Whatcom County believes this is an excellent plan for the future of this regional economic asset and will tie together industrial and economic opportunities, shoreline goals and objectives with land use and transportation needs as well as solidify the City of Bellingham’s role as the regional hub for marine, rail, transit and other modes of transportation within the waterfront corridor.

The following are our general overview comments to the plan:

1. The Plan logically divides the waterfront planning areas between the following reaches:

Little Squalicum  
Squalicum  
City Center  
South Hill and Boulevard Park  
Fairhaven  
Chuckanut and Edgemoor

2. The plan provides a statement of principles that are largely supportive of integrated transportation planning and sustainable development concepts. The plan will be dependent upon good site planning, environmental restoration, research efforts and a long term funding vision. The Plan will do the following:

- Encourage mixed use and residential development within the City of Bellingham can be a viable alternative to developing rural county lands beyond the Urban Growth Area boundaries
- Accommodate mixed used development along with the development of Multi-modal strategies. Our concern is that these strategies must be integrated throughout the plan for the waterfront and consistent with transportation planning in the adjacent neighborhoods

- Transit oriented design (TOD) can be an important cornerstone for high-density developments along the shoreline corridor. This must be accompanied by the appropriate corridor services provided by Whatcom Transit or other providers of transportation choices.
- The plan is generally consistent with County-wide and Regional environmental restoration efforts as well as economic development efforts of the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County EDC and the areas' tribes vision for economic development

The following comments are addressing our general big picture concerns for long-term implementation and coordination along the Waterfront:

- The proposed waterfront development plan should be consistent with Whatcom Transit Association long term plans for service within Bellingham and specifically for this corridor
- The proposed waterfront development plan should be consistent with Western Washington University's vision for environmental and marine research and other marine and natural environmental research efforts
- The plan should better incorporate an additional 2,000 units of housing within the region and perhaps as well as additional 2,000 to 4,000 units of housing within a mile of the waterfront by 2024. Growth Management projections for population growth
- A regional long term coordinating effort must be

#### Transportation and the Waterfront Development Plan Generally Comments

- Each of the various waterfront areas are connected by pedestrian linkages or paths and this is consistent with land use and transportation planning efforts
- Pedestrian linkages to parks and open spaces are incorporated into the plan
- Regional efforts need to be tied to local efforts at connection-making this is where long term organizational efforts are required to implement all facets of the plan
- Transportation via small boat to each of the shoreline reaches has been accommodated in the plan
- The urban waterfront accommodates transit/jitney with numerous transit stops consistent with a transportation corridor concept for transit service

- The central waterfront should necessarily include the greatest mixed use development and be able to accommodate the greatest long term increases in population, office buildings and transportation via mixed modes and priority of personal mobility investments, many of the strategic infrastructure components to support such a concentration are already in place
- Short city blocks, 200 feet by 200 feet should be encouraged where possible as these are pedestrian-friendly consistent with the Fairhaven area or perhaps the Central Bellingham waterfront.
- More areas for stacked boat storage may be needed than the plan currently incorporates as the regional population of the Puget Sound continues to increase by nearly 1,000,000 every ten years and this is a regional facility on a regional natural resource

#### Little Squalicum

- Marine Drive should be upgraded to accommodate multi-modal (bike, pedestrian, transit, auto)
- Rail must be accommodated and protected from other transportation choices
- Parking areas should be limited near shorelines of statewide significance

#### Squalicum

- Rail must be accommodated and protected from conflicts with other transportation choices
- Expansion of the marina should be tied to expansion of transportation service to the marina and the waterfront corridor at least seasonally and parking rates and parking policies
- Expansion of mixed uses should be tied to improvements in the transit corridor and considerations for additional parking rates and parking policies
- New pedestrian overpasses are excellent solutions to transportation conflicts and will help increase “walking the waterfront” and community health
- Creating areas for shopping must be linked to personal mobility and transportation choice to the shopping (seafood) center

- Additional mixed use development should be accompanied with improvements in transportation services worked out with Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA)

#### City Center

- Marine deep water entrance should continue to be encouraged and maintained
- Rail must be accommodated and protected
- The inclusion of parking structures adjacent to the bluff is a good use of this area unless additional development (office, commercial and residential mixed uses is considered a higher and better use in these areas) and will help to buffer rail traffic as it grows
- Improving access to the waterfront and connection to regional trails is a long term goal
- Transit corridors must tie together and provide improved service along the central waterfront – transit loops provide alternatives for modal choices and opportunities for higher capacity planning
- Western Washington University inclusion on the central waterfront should be a regional transportation and land use priority – bringing regional attention to funding for Tacoma UW Campus style trains or Seattle style waterfront light rail/street cars

#### South Hill and Boulevard Park

- Rail must be accommodated and protected
- Providing links to regional trail system is an excellent idea given the existing density of this area
- Water Taxi access at Boulevard Park may not be economically viable

#### Fairhaven

- Mixed Use developments should incorporate parking designs and policies consistent with existing Fairhaven Neighborhood plans
- Transit Corridor services must be improved significantly between the City's CBD and the Fairhaven CBD. Consideration of attractive alternatives to diesel transit
- Rail must be accommodated and protected
- The Fairhaven CBD will incorporate far more housing and mixed use development in the future than we are accustomed to at this time

therefore shoreline access should be carefully planned for including separation of pedestrian and rail and pedestrian and automobiles where practical

- Fairhaven is also the transportation/rail link for the region as well as the transportation link to Alaska. Transit and parking should be expanded to accommodate future increases in this use as Bellingham is tied to the Central Puget Sound via improve rail linkages.
- Fairhaven is noteworthy for its maintenance of neighborhood integrity via Land Use and Building Design standards. New Mixed Use developments should incorporate Fairhaven's approach to community design review including mixed-use buildings. Transportation policies should include pedestrian scale transportation linkages consistent with these.

#### Chuckanut and Edgemoor

- Rail must be accommodated and protected
- Part of the charm and distinctiveness of Bellingham are its quiet neighborhoods
- Access to regional trail systems should be maintained

### **Other Issues and Recommendations**

#### Housing Diversity

- The plan should specifically mention diversity of the future housing stock, including town houses apartments and condos with 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 square feet and discuss the need for integrated design and transportation systems to these housing developments

#### Capital Facilities

- The plan should specifically mention and link Western Washington University's (WWU) long term capital planning efforts to the Waterfront and should strongly support regional transportation planning efforts including demand management over new asphalt projects
- All new City, County, or University capital facilities should include transit oriented design features within the Waterfront Planning area

#### Economic Development

- The City of Bellingham's Shoreline Master Program should specifically integrate efforts at regional economic development with the City's vision for economic development

- The Waterfront Plan must stimulate the entire Whatcom County economy since it is a regional asset. Therefore regional economic development monies should be sought to help achieve that through appropriate levels of new infrastructure development
- Ideally, the scarce industrial waterfront remaining within the Waterfront Plan should be reserved for marine related industrial uses (boat building, repair for example) and some allowance for their expansion should be anticipated.
- Commercial/light industrial activity in the Fairhaven area should continue to serve as a catalyst or stimulus to adjacent commercial areas and to the goal of bringing more of the general public to the waterfront where this goal does not conflict with the economic goal for the sake of compatibility
- Commercial uses must recognize the industrial nature, heritage and future of the central waterfront of Fairhaven