




Darby K Galligan/ncd/cob  
05/21/2009 02:34 PM

To Michael Lilliquist <lilliquist@comcast.net>  
cc charlesrdyer@clearwire.net, Heather M  
Aven/planning/cob@cob, Tara J Sundin/ncd/cob@cob  
bcc  
Subject Re: Samish Way design guidelines 

Thanks, Michael -

We'll make sure your comments are entered into the public record for discussion, and as soon as the design regulations are ready (at least 2 weeks prior to the hearing date) I will send them out via email.

Best,

Darby Galligan  
Development Specialist II  
City of Bellingham  
Planning and Community Development  
210 Lottie Street  
360.778.8389  
Michael Lilliquist <lilliquist@comcast.net>



Michael Lilliquist  
<lilliquist@comcast.net>  
05/21/2009 01:41 PM

To Darby Galligan <DGalligan@cob.org>  
cc <charlesrdyer@clearwire.net>  
Subject Re: Samish Way design guidelines

Darby,

You tell me that the new design guidelines are not yet available, and so I have decided -- perhaps foolishly -- to send a letter that I drafted about design standards anyway. My hope is that this early comment may influence some of the content of the upcoming language. I may re-submit the comments later, if it looks as if that would be appropriate. Here are my "premature" comments:

Darby Galligan, Planner  
City of Bellingham

Re: Windows, doors and more

Darby,

I finally had a chance to re-read the Samish Way Urban Village materials in detail, and I think the plan and regulations are for the most part excellent. As someone who attended the public input meetings, I am glad to see this long project entering the home stretch. I think success on this project can help lead to other successes in other parts of the city. That's the plan, isn't it!

However, I am concerned that the character of buildings at the pedestrian level are not well specified. Our goal, as I understand it, is to achieve a pedestrian-friendly experience at the street level. In the Samish Way Urban Village Plan, I see a fair amount of attention to the streets, sidewalks and public plazas (if any), but I see almost no attention to the other crucial half of the equation – the buildings themselves. I see that the draft regulations refer to a new section of the BMC dealing with design review. This is good, but I suggest that the Plan should also include a brief section on building design, not just on building scale. In other words, it would be good to lay a policy support for the regulatory language.

The design regulations are not yet available for review. Even so, I offer the following comment: To be implemented in a predictable and fair fashion, I think we need to indicate clear enough language to indicate what sort of buildings, particularly at street level, would be encouraged and/or allowed. The design review board will need some standards to apply.

As I read the Samish Way Urban Village goals, the City has stated clear purposes and priorities for the street level experience, but has less interest in the character of buildings above street level. If this is correct, then the guidelines should reflect this fact by providing more guidance on the design of the first floor along the street, and by providing more freedom in design for the upper levels. Of course, there will still be height and step-back requirements, but these affect scale rather than design. My concern here is with design.

For example, would like to see guidance concerning the door and window pattern at street level. I can easily imagine a well-intended landowner or architect failing to achieve a successful design, due to a lack of specification or clarity. I have seen many examples of supposedly progressive and pedestrian-friendly architecture fail in this one crucial aspect.

Off the top of my head, the new Key Bank building downtown is an example of a near-miss: The side of the building along Holly is not nearly as friendly as it might be. Pedestrians walk across a mostly blank wall with windows up uncomfortably high; moreover, the windows are large “storefront” type panes, which appear to be looking into private office space, which causes the pedestrian to want to look away and walk further away from the building to give the occupant some privacy. Around the back and sides, Key bank has put in some landscaping that I doubt anyone will use – trails from nowhere to nowhere, right next to a parking lot. As you may know, the old Key Bank had a similarly unsuccessful “pedestrian” feature that was almost unused, except by the homeless with no other place to go. This is the sort of expensive, well-intentioned failure that I would like to avoid in the Samish Way Urban Village, and our other urban centers.

One key, I believe, is to have frequent and regularly spaced doors and windows at the pedestrian level, particularly windows with relatively low sills (2 to 2.5 feet from grade). [Another problem can be created by going to far in the other direction: windows that extend to within a foot of the ground or lower are not as “comfortable” to stand next to or walk near; they are too exposed; people feel as if they are “blocking” the window.] To provide an enjoyable street-level experience, people need to be able to feel comfortable being next to the

building and feel comfortable looking out and looking in, such as through a café window or a shop window. On a related subject, in general people respond more favorably to windows that are taller than they are wide, even if this means many windows separated by mullions. Of course, this would work well for restaurants and offices, less well for retail storefronts, but it may still be worthwhile to indicate such design tools for creating a more people-friendly building face. What about variety in window shape (arched tops?) or variety in window sill depth, or window planters when the building is set back from the property line? Will these be encouraged, allowed, or suggested?

I have also heard experts say that the key to a pedestrian-friendly building front is less in the number and spacing of windows (although that is important) than it is about doors. People only look through windows, but they actually or potentially go through doors. Doors are the actual welcoming points. I have heard that one project in another city actually put in some false or unnecessary doors to break up the building façade, and it worked beautifully. From a psychological perspective, a pedestrian does not have to actually enter every building, but must feel as if some people, other people, actually do go in and out – that the building is actually tied to the life on the sidewalks.

Another aspect of building design that promotes a pedestrian-friendly streetscape is to avoid long stretches of similar building façade. The simple solution, used in several buildings around town, is to break the building façade into smaller units, creating the impression narrower multistory buildings, rather than one large building. This can also be achieved by varying the design and location of awnings – which, by the way, is another pedestrian friendly design feature that is not discussed in the plan. Do we want to encourage awnings, or limit how far they can project over the sidewalk? As much as we don't like getting wet, we also don't like too much shade for when the sun does come out. This can be addressed, perhaps, with some guidelines on the height of awnings: Awnings higher up will cast less of a shadow, but block nearly as much rain.

There are many other such design features that might be called out and encouraged within the Urban Village Plan. One place to look for inspiration, if you have not done so already, is the groundbreaking "A Pattern Language," edited by Christopher Alexander ( ISBN-13: 978-0195019193).

As mentioned above, there is very little in the Samish Way Urban Village Plan to Y indicates how buildings are to interact with the sidewalk or pedestrians, or what kind of design elements or features would be looked upon favorably as meeting the goal of an "interesting and comfortable environment for pedestrians." I suggest that without more specific guidance or examples, we may see a hit-or-miss pattern of design. In particular, I suggest that the Plan be modified to include some language to more clearly indicate what sort of design features would be considered as meeting the goal of creating "an interesting and comfortable environment for pedestrians." Building on this policy foundation, the design regulations could then include some specific language calling for the prohibition of large blank spaces, for example, and calling for the inclusion of frequent and closely spaced windows and doors where ever feasible,

within the commercial core in particular.

Of course, I hope that we will avoid an overly prescriptive approach to design. I think we can do this in a manner similar to the "design standards" versus "design guidelines" in the Infill Toolkit. For example, requiring a doorway at least every 30-feet might be a "standard," whereas including tall windows in favor of wide windows might be just a "guideline." These are just my provisional suggestions, of course. City staff may already have these bases covered. My real point is that I believe we need some kind of guidelines, otherwise we are asking people to achieve some effect (pedestrian friendly buildings) without indicating what we mean and how it might be achieved. Given the importance of the goal, I recommend that such guidance be written into the Urban Village Plan as well as in the design regulations.

Thank you for considering my comments, and for passing them along to the planning commission members for the upcoming hearing scheduled in June.

~ Michael Lilliquist

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On 5/21/09 8:47 AM, "Darby Galligan" <[DGalligan@cob.org](mailto:DGalligan@cob.org)> wrote:

> Good question!

>

> The new design standards under BMC 20.25 are in process and will also be  
> brought forward to the Planning Commission on June 18th. As soon as the  
> draft is ready I will send out an email and post them on the website for  
> review (this will be at least 2 weeks prior to the hearing date).

>

> Darby Galligan

>

>> Darby,

>>

>> A couple of us were talking last night about design guidelines for the Samish  
>> Way Urban Village, and we can't find them. There appears to be a reference  
>> to BMC 20.25.040(E), but that section does not (yet?) exist and it was not  
>> part of any materials I could find.

>>

>> I am concerned how and whether the character of buildings at the pedestrian  
>> level will be guided. Our goal, as I understand it, is to achieve a  
>> pedestrian-friendly experience at the street level. In the Samish Way Urban  
>> Village Plan, I see a fair amount of attention to the streets, sidewalks and  
>> public plazas (if any), but I see little attention to the other crucial half  
>> of the equation – the buildings themselves. Is that the missing section?  
>> Right now, all I see is the policy statement:

>>

> 3.1. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER POLICES

>

> Land Use Policies Require ground floor commercial uses along Samish Way.

>

> Site Design Policies Develop sites to create an interesting and comfortable  
> environment for pedestrians. Construct buildings adjacent to the sidewalk  
> except when setback to accommodate plazas, outdoor dining, wider sidewalks or  
> enhanced landscaping.

>

>> Thanks for any help and information you can provide on this matter, and  
>> thanks for all your work on this great project.

>>

>> ~ Michael

~ Michael



"The Steiners"  
<hlsteiner@comcast.net>  
06/08/2009 09:54 PM

To <planningcommission@cob.org>  
cc <dpike@cob.org>  
bcc  
Subject Samish Way Urban Village

MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COMMISSION  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham Washington 98225

May 22, 2009

Bellingham Planning Commission  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, Washington 98225

Dear Planning Commission Members

The Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC) recommends the Planning Commission approve City Staff Proposal 08-S5 Amendment to Sehome and York Neighborhood Plans for the Samish Way Urban Village master plan.

This recommendation is based on a presentation by Darby Galligan of the City Planning Staff and discussion following the presentation at the March 18, 2009, MNAC Meeting. This resulted in a unanimous vote of approval by MNAC representatives at the April 15, 2009, advisory commission meeting. Further, MNAC feels the Samish Way Urban Village master plan meets the Working Definition and Key Principles of an Urban Village as set forth by the City of Bellingham. Therefore, the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission urges the Bellingham Planning Commission to approve the Samish Way Urban Village master plan.

Respectively submitted:

Kate Grinde      Michael Lilliquist      Tom Scott  
Greg McCracken      Brad Rose      Howard Steiner  
Cathy McKenzie  
Comprehensive Planning Committee  
Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission

cc: City of Bellingham Mayor Dan Pike  
P.S. This letter was unanimously approved by resolution of MNAC Representatives at the May 20, 2009 meeting by all neighborhoods present.

June 10, 2009

Dear Planning Commission Members:

We are home owners along North 34<sup>th</sup> Street in the Sehome Neighborhood, in the single-family district directly across the street from where the city plans to apply the Urban Village planning concept and use of the Infill Planning Toolkit. While we are generally pleased with both the plan and implementation tools, these comments will be specific to the areas where we have two issues of importance:

- **Cottage Housing, Small Lot Housing, and Smaller Lot Housing type in residential transition area.**

In keeping with policy statements throughout the Samish Way Urban Village Sub-Area Plan, calling for an appropriate transition where urban village development meets single-family areas, we strongly encourage housing types that would best lend themselves to owner occupancy and single-family living along 34<sup>th</sup> Street. We feel that goal would be fulfilled very well by the cottage, small lot and smaller lot housing as found in BMC section 20.28.040 of the Infill Toolkit.

Our concern with other housing types mentioned in the Toolkit is that they would lend themselves to rental usage, particularly due to the Neighborhood's proximity to Western Washington University. Much of the Sehome Neighborhood already is devoted to rentals. We feel, in the transition zone where new development meets established single-family homes, that it is important to choose housing types that most closely match the single-family atmosphere.

- **No automobile access from new development east of North 34<sup>th</sup> Street.**

We also would like to be sure that there will be no automobile access to the new development from North 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Our concern on automobile access to the possible redevelopment of the Samish Mobile Home Park is related to major increase in traffic as well as increased safety concerns for pedestrians and bicycle users of the street. Additionally, with modifications for bicycles at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street intersection with Bill MacDonald Parkway, this street could become a preferred bicycle alternative to Samish Way, once redevelopment begins.

Those are our main points; following are other points of interest:

• **Affordable Housing** While we are pleased with the idea of using the Infill Toolkit to determine housing types along the east side of 34<sup>th</sup> Street, it would not hurt to consider another option. If affordable housing is required to be a consideration, then it might be appropriate to approach the Kulshan Land Trust to accomplish something similar to their Harris Street development.

• **Onstreet Parking** Regarding future discussion on parking and sidewalk improvements, we have concerns about preserving the character of the street as in currently appears.

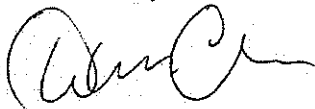
• **Pedestrian path** access from North 34<sup>th</sup> Street to future commercial areas on Samish Way and 35<sup>th</sup> Street. The plan proposes a private easement for pedestrians through the redevelopment of the mobile home park. We want to be sure that the easement creating this path will allow access by the general public, for two reasons:

- pedestrian access from the existing neighborhood to future commercial and retail businesses on 35<sup>th</sup> Street and Samish Way;
- and pedestrian access for residents in the new housing to the proposed access to the Sehome Arboretum off of Allen Street.

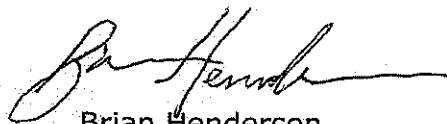
Finally, we would like to say that Bellingham's Planning and Community Development Department has done an excellent job in this planning process. Staff has been exemplary both in the formal public meetings and in separate meetings with neighborhood groups and individuals, and it has been a pleasure working with them.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Sincerely



Dave Cole  
203 N. 34<sup>th</sup> St.



Brian Henderson  
119 N. 34<sup>th</sup> St.



Tim Hostetler  
201 N. 34<sup>th</sup> St.



June 11, 2009

Darby Galligan  
Development Specialist II  
City of Bellingham  
Planning and Community Development Department  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Re: June 18, 2009 Planning Commission Public Hearing on the proposed Samish Way Urban Village

Thank you for the chance to comment on the Samish Way Urban Village proposal. The Sehome Neighborhood Association Board is very pleased with both the proposal and the excellent open and interactive process you and the Planning Department have utilized to develop it. You certainly have demonstrated that you want to craft clear guidelines for an urban village that will be aesthetically pleasing and functional for the surrounding neighborhoods and for the city as a whole. We do, however, have several items of concern for staff and the Planning Commission to consider.

The Sehome Neighborhood Association Board, by a 7-0 decision at its June 10, 2009 meeting, passed the following motion:

We request that the City require that the Samish Way Urban Village residential transition zone along 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Otis Street be limited to the form designated "small lot" in the Infill Toolkit or the single family development under BMC 20.30 (5000 square feet or greater).

We recommend that a small lot development structured like a cottage development be allowed where there is space, i.e., a cottage style but with larger homes and minimum 3000 foot lot size.

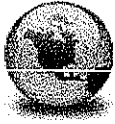
We further request that the City require that there be no new access from 34<sup>th</sup> Street to new developments in this residential transition zone. Access shall come from 35<sup>th</sup> Street (which would be extended as part of the development) and Samish Way.


Finally, we request that the City require that all developments in this residential transition zone have an absolute height limit of 25 feet, as opposed to an average height of 25 feet with a pitched roof.

I am available if you wish to discuss any of these items, and I will be making a presentation at the Planning Commission Hearing on June 18.

Sincerely,

Don Keenan, President  
Sehome Neighborhood Association Board



Re: Samish Way Urban Village   
 Darby K Galligan to: m60044bo  
 Cc: Heather M Aven

06/11/2009 04:33 PM

Thanks, Ed. We will add this to the public comment record. We can take out the personal note if you want (or leave it in if you want, too!). :) Hope you can make it on the 18th.

Darby Galligan  
 Development Specialist II  
 City of Bellingham  
 Planning and Community Development  
 210 Lottie Street  
 360.778.8389

"Motel 6 44" <m60044bo@motel6.com>



"Motel 6 44"  
 <m60044bo@motel6.com>  
 06/11/2009 03:18 PM

Please respond to  
 <m60044bo@motel6.com>

To <dgalligan@cob.org>  
 cc <charlesrdyer@clearwire.net>  
 Subject Samish Way Urban Village

Darby,

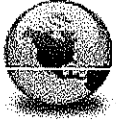
Thank you for all the work you and your colleagues have done to design and plan the Samish Way Urban Village project. I am so excited to see this project moved forward by the City Council.

You have my complete support for this project. I will try to attend the June 18 meeting, but if not, thank you again for the tremendous amount of time and energy you and the City has invested in this worthwhile project.

On a snippy little personal note: The new building on the corners of York and N. State; Did that slip past the planners? It is one of the ugliest buildings in the city and the similar buildings that approach this degree of ugliness are mostly hidden away. All the strange angles and the 1970's kitchen appliance colors are dizzying. I hope nobody authorized that on purpose because it is purely nauseating.

**Edward Crasper, General Manager**  
**Motel 6 #0044, 3701 Byron Avenue**  
**Bellingham, WA 98225-6020**  
**Phone: (360) 671-4494**

"Our very lives are fashioned by choice. First we make choices. Then our choices make us." — **Anne Frank**



Re: Letter to Planning Commission for its June 18, 2009, Meeting 

Darby K Galligan to: Charles Dyer

06/12/2009 09:15 AM

Cc: Heather M Aven

Thanks Charley - we'll get this put into the record for Planning Commission review. Hope to see you on the 18th!

Darby Galligan  
Development Specialist II  
City of Bellingham  
Planning and Community Development  
210 Lottie Street  
360.778.8389  
Charles Dyer <charlesrdyer@clearwire.net>



Charles Dyer  
<charlesrdyer@clearwire.net  
>

06/11/2009 05:52 PM

To Darby Galligan <DGalligan@cob.org>

cc Don Keenan <donkeenan777@hotmail.com>

Subject Letter to Planning Commission for its June 18, 2009, Meeting

June 11, 2009

Members of the City of Bellingham Planning Commission and the City Council  
c/o Darby Galligan, Development Specialist II  
City of Bellingham

Re: Items 2 and 3, Planning Commission Meeting, June 18, 2009  
Recommend: Approval with proviso noted.

To the Honorable Planning Commissioners and the Honorable City Council  
Members:

As the current chair of the Sehome Neighborhood Association's Samish Way Committee, I want you to know how greatly pleased I am that the Samish Way Urban Village master plan and accompanying regulations are going forward. The work on getting to where we are now has been excellent. The City staff have been very resourceful and inventive, while listening very well to the community of stakeholders. I also believe they have done excellent work at drafting regulations that will get the work done and lay the groundwork for good serious development along Samish Way. With the exception of the concerns regarding Infill Toolkit forms and height limits in a particular residential transition zone, as laid out by the Sehome Neighborhood Association Board of Directors in the June 11, 2009, letter from Don Keenan to Darby Galligan, I wholeheartedly approve of both the Samish Way Urban Village master plan and the new design standards for urban villages that will be brought to the Planning Commission at its June 18 meeting.

This letter represents my own personal opinion, and I am not speaking for the Sehome Board. I have reviewed thoroughly all the documentation on both items. I have also served on the SNA Samish Way Committee almost since its beginning and have attended all the open meetings and many

small informal conferences on the project. By way of background, I am a lawyer and I served for four years, 2000-2003, on the Centre City Advisory Committee of the City of San Diego, a citizen board that did design review and some other chores for the 5,200 acre Centre City (downtown San Diego). That committee met every three weeks for meetings averaging four hours, reviewing development plans for both very large downtown buildings and for smaller scale urban village buildings, such as in the Little Italy and Ballpark Zones. I also chaired the City of San Diego's Relocation Appeals Board, 2001-2005. I moved to Bellingham in 2005. I attended Planning Academy I, and I was co-author of the Sehome Neighborhood Plan (December 1, 2007) that has been accepted by the Planning Department and currently waits for docketing.

I find the plans and regulations to be not only superior in recognizing the aesthetic issues and quality of life issues that make such development important, but also to be ones that should be highly instructive to developers, hopefully saving them substantial amounts of development cost by getting it right in the first place.

If action can be taken on the concerns expressed in Don Keenan's June 11 letter, then I strongly recommend that both items be approved as thus tweaked.

Yours very sincerely,

Charles R. Dyer  
Vice President, Sehome Neighborhood Association  
Chair, Sehome Neighborhood Association Samish Way Committee  
(Writing on my own behalf)

--  
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Charles R. Dyer Consulting  
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fax 360-738-6439 (call first)  
mobile 360-483-9446  
charlesrdyer@clearwire.net  
www.charlesrdyer.com



Re: Public Comment Requested - Samish Way Urban Village Draft Plans 

Darby K Galligan to: Kathryn Schlecht

06/15/2009 04:36 PM

Cc: Heather M Aven

Mr. & Mrs. Schlecht -

Thank you for sending your comments - we'll forward them to the Planning Commission for review.

For your information: The Sub-Area plan has been revised to show the road design and alignment for the proposed extension of 37th Street is "to be determined" at the time property owners wish to redevelop, instead of the 60-foot right-of-way we had shown previously. I hope that somewhat eases your concerns.

The public hearing is this Thursday at 7:00 pm in the City Council chambers if you're interested in attending.

Sincerely,

Darby Galligan  
Development Specialist II  
City of Bellingham  
Planning and Community Development  
210 Lottie Street  
360.778.8389

"Kathryn Schlecht" <dnkschlecht@msn.com>



"Kathryn Schlecht"  
<dnkschlecht@msn.com>  
06/15/2009 04:15 PM

To <DGalligan@cob.org>  
cc

Subject Re: Public Comment Requested - Samish Way Urban Village  
Draft Plans

TO: Darby Gilligan and Members of the Planning Committee  
RE: 3702 Abbott Street

For the record and to reiterate our letter to you of March 23, 2009 after the March 17th meeting with you and other affected property owners:

1. We are opposed to the 37th Street extension and footpath which would take away a major portion of our land to the detriment and devaluation of the 3702 Abbott St. property.
2. A 30 or 60 foot road across the property would only reduce the buildable square footage plus fewer on-site parking spaces. Building height and parking requirements to compensate for loss does not alter the fact there is only so much buildable square footage.
3. Presently 3702 ABBOTT ST. has good street access to the property along with basic utilities such as water, sewer, power and cable. Located on a dead-end street, 1/2 block off

Samish Way, the private and secluded setting we feel is more desirable than busy street exposure.

4. Samish Way could stand a facelift but let's confine it to Samish Way.

David and Kathryn Schlecht  
1791 Academy Road  
Bellingham, Wa.  
98226