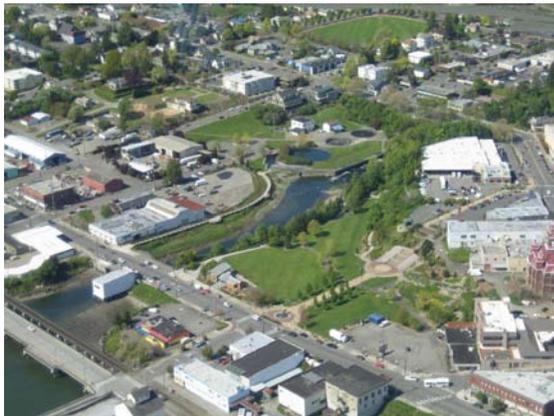


# CHAPTER FIVE

## PARKS, PLAZAS, AND WATER CONNECTIONS

### 5. PARKS, PLAZAS and WATER CONNECTIONS

Existing parks and natural features provide a strong public core to the Old Town district. However, small public gathering places and additional recreational programs and amenities are needed to enhance Old Town's public realm.



Sitting at the heart of Old Town, Maritime Heritage Park (MHP) is the primary park in Old Town serving the district, downtown, and the community at large. MHP bears little resemblance to its former incarnations as a lumber mill, municipal dump and sewage treatment plant. Today it is home to a fish hatchery, wonderful creekside trails, an amphitheatre, several artworks, a classroom, and an expansive green open space. Over the last decade, significant improvements have been made to the Park, yet it's still not used as the community gathering place it could become.

Efforts by the City and non-profit groups such as the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, have created greater public access along the waters edge and to the water. A boardwalk, trails and overlooks provide for walking, biking, fishing, and leisure activities. Additional public access is needed along Whatcom Creek Estuary between Holly and Roeder.

The Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot and the Whatcom Territorial

Courthouse are two of Old Town's historic highlights, both of which provide opportunities for new public space. To highlight these historic resources and increase the number of public gathering places in Old Town, lands adjacent to these buildings could be enhanced to form public plazas.

**5.1. PARKS, PLAZAS AND WATER**

**CONNECTIONS POLICIES**

1. Encourage businesses, neighbors and the community to promote more use of Maritime Heritage Park by providing more programming such as concerts at the amphitheatre, concessions, markets and movies.
2. Provide additional public places and recreational amenities for nearby residents and employees of all demographics, such as play areas, dog walks, and public squares and plazas.
3. Facilitate restoration of the Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot and open it to the public.
4. Support the hatchery and educational programs at Maritime Heritage Park.
5. Continue to provide, maintain and increase public access opportunities along Whatcom Creek waterway.

**5.2. PARKS, PLAZAS AND WATER**

**CONNECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

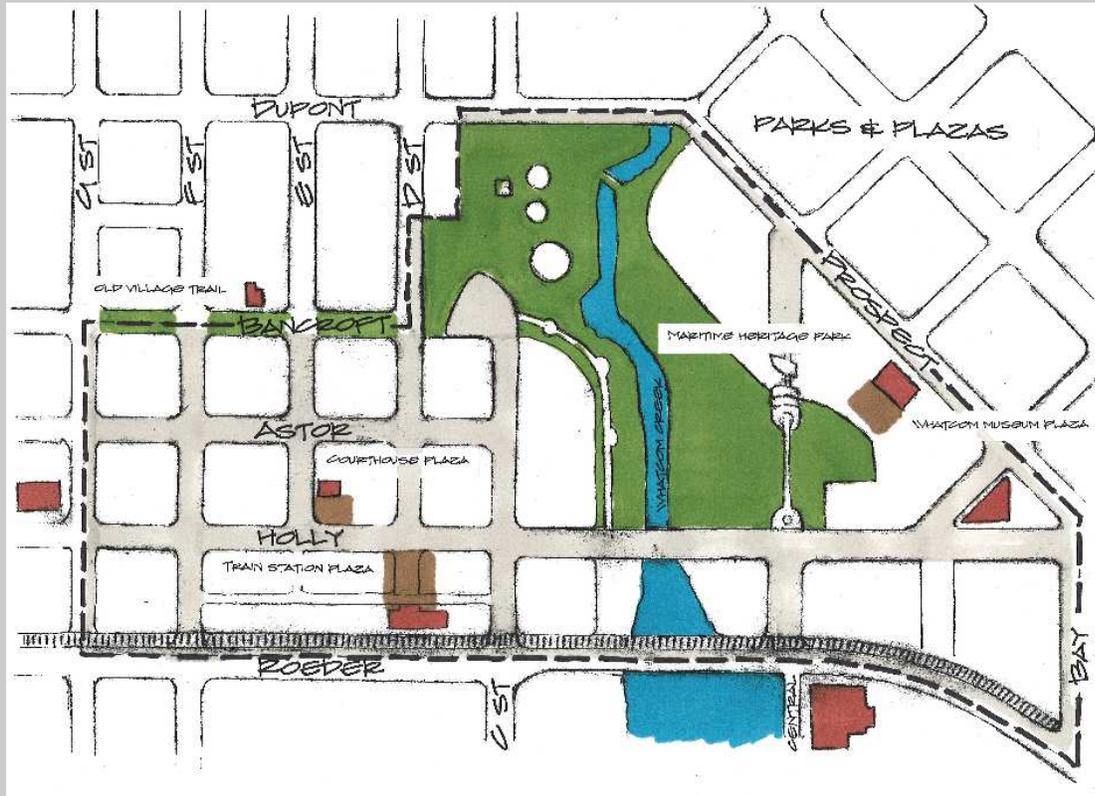
1. Work with private property owners

and stakeholders to design and create public spaces in front of the Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot and the Whatcom Territorial Courthouse. Consider incorporating a transit and/or circulator stop at the Depot site.

2. Require new development to face parks, new plazas and trails.
3. Require ground floor commercial uses when immediately adjacent to the public plazas.
4. Add children's play equipment to Maritime Heritage Park and other amenities and programming.
5. Continue educational programming in the classroom building.
6. Conduct an analysis of parkland, projected growth, demand and needs to inform decisions on park uses and amenities.
7. Create a public gathering space at the Whatcom Museum overlooking Maritime Heritage Park. Incorporate the cultural and natural history of the area.
8. Improve the alley between the Whatcom Museum and Syre building with lighting and artwork to draw people to and from the Arts District.
9. Identify and maintain visual connections to the estuary from the Park.
10. Acquire property along the Whatcom Creek waterway to allow for public access and habitat restoration.
11. Identify bike parking needs and add capacity as required.

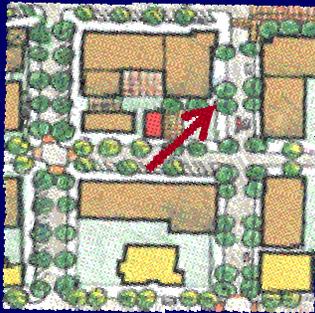
# CHAPTER FIVE

## PARKS, PLAZAS, AND WATER CONNECTIONS



## Territorial Courthouse Plaza

The oldest brick building in the state, the Whatcom Territorial Courthouse, is now owned by the Whatcom Historical Society. The Society is working to secure funding to renovate and preserve this building. By allowing development rights to be transferred from this property to another parcel within Old Town or by designating park impact fees, a plaza south of the Courthouse should be developed. The plaza would not only provide a public gathering place, it would also enhance the visibility of the Courthouse honoring its importance as an historic landmark building. A special opportunity exists to use this space to highlight the history of the area or to honor a long time family owned business in the area, Northwest Recycling.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## PARKS, PLAZAS, AND WATER CONNECTIONS

### **Great Northern Railroad Passenger Plaza**

*The Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot is one of Old Town's historic highlights, which provides a link to Old Town's past. A public plaza should be created in front of the station. The plaza should be flanked with ground floor retail uses and outdoor dining should be encouraged. Plaza design details and programming should be dependent on the future use of the train station.*

