



PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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May 30, 2013

APA/PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart Street, Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

RE: Nomination of Bellingham's Fairhaven Urban Village / Neighborhood Plan

Dear APA-PAW Joint Awards Committee Members:

The City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department is proud to submit its Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan, corresponding development regulations, and design standards for consideration of the 2013 APA-PAW Joint Awards Program in the category of **Citizen Involvement**, and secondarily in the category of **Physical Plans-Large Cities & Counties**.

Fairhaven is one of Bellingham's oldest and most highly valued neighborhoods. One of four original towns that incorporated in 1904 to become the City of Bellingham, it is small in size but a "city" in its own right. Today, Fairhaven maintains a thriving commercial historic district, pleasant residential areas, natural open spaces and a working waterfront. Located at the terminus of a State scenic byway, Fairhaven serves as a regional transportation hub and hosts the Alaska Ferry Terminal, Amtrak Station, and Greyhound Bus Terminal, and draws visitors locally, regionally, and nationwide.

One of the principal challenges for city staff in the project was to bridge the significant divide that existed between the various stakeholder groups regarding the very future of Fairhaven. This was ultimately achieved by bringing the groups together, listening and responding to their concerns, providing factual data and visual imagery. This approach helped build trust in the process and eventually moved the stakeholders toward consensus.

The Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan project represents an exceptional example of long-range planning that employed considerable public participation and consensus-building effort to achieve a broadly supported product. The final plan and supporting regulatory documents clarify and implement the community's values, vision, and goals as adopted in the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan and Growth Management Act, to promote compact urban infill development that is sensitive to historic and natural resources, as well as to the economic vitality and quality of life for long-term residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this innovative project for the 2013 APA-PAW Award.

Sincerely,

Jeff Thomas, Director
Planning and Community Development

Project Contact: Katie Franks, Development Specialist II
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Award Category: Citizen Involvement
Alternate Category: Physical Plans - Large Cities & Counties

List of Nominees
City of Bellingham, Planning and Community Development staff

Name of agency to be listed on Award plaque
City of Bellingham

Individual Names on Award Certificates
Jeff Thomas, Planning and Community Development Director
Greg Aucutt, Senior Planner
Nicole Oliver, Communications Coordinator
Chris Koch, Planner II
Jackie Lynch, Planner II
Katie Franks, Development Specialist II
Chris Behee, GIS Analyst II
Kurt Nabbefeld, Senior Planner
Chris Comeau, Transportation Planner
Heather Aven, Planning Secretary

Three Letters of endorsement included from:
Bellingham City Council
Geyer & Associates, Inc.
Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Five Graphic Exhibits included

I. Summary of the Plan Scope, Preparation Time, and Key Participants

(50 word max)

Between December, 2010 and August 2012, Planning and Community Development staff completed an extensive and innovative citizen involvement process that successfully engaged disparate stakeholder groups and resulted in the creation of the Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan (FNUVP), development regulations and design standards.

II. Project Description *(300 word max)*

Staff's primary goal for the FNUVP project was to unite Fairhaven constituents, community groups and other interested parties to fully update the Fairhaven Neighborhood Plan and regulations. The Fairhaven Neighborhood had a long history of public involvement and community activism, and beginning in the 1960s, concern for the welfare and preservation of Fairhaven's unique qualities began to grow among residents, property and business owners, and the citizens of Bellingham. In the early 1980s, a citizen-led group spent hundreds of hours analyzing and planning for Fairhaven's future, resulting in a substantial report that they used to form policy and guide development through the following decades. Today, the citizens of Fairhaven have maintained this self-governing spirit, and pride themselves for independently managing and protecting their neighborhood.

Fairhaven's pioneering spirit materialized again in 2007, when the neighborhood took the opportunity to write and submit an update to what had become an antiquated neighborhood plan. However, fundamental differences of opinion arose between residents, commercial property owners, and merchants about the future vision for Fairhaven, resulting in a complete communication breakdown. The growing chasm between the conflicted groups stalled efforts to move forward, and three years later Fairhaven, Bellingham's beloved neighborhood and model "urban village", still had its outdated neighborhood plan.

Finally, in 2010 the Bellingham City Council directed Planning and Community Development staff to step in and help the neighborhood move forward to complete a neighborhood and urban village plan. Two years and 25 meetings later, the project was successfully carried through the legislative process, which consisted of public hearings and a combined total of eight work sessions with Planning Commission and City Council. In August, 2012 the new Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan, corresponding development regulations, and design standards were adopted and added to the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code.

III. Why the project is unique, significant, and a successful contribution to planning; and the role the nominee and others played in the project

(300 word max)

The project is unique for the sheer volume of citizen outreach and involvement that was initiated by staff, the amount of information made available via the City website, and staff's innovative use of planning technologies such as GIS, three-dimensional modeling, and illustrative photographic enhancement.

Staff's role in the project was to build and maintain the public trust, move constituents toward consensus, and complete a policy framework plan, strategic development

regulations and objective design standards that would guide development in Fairhaven for the next 20 years. While opinions between stakeholders were never completely aligned, staff's public engagement strategy effectively maintained a transparent process and demonstrated respect for all interest groups, keeping communication open between factions over the two year process.

In addition to maintaining a healthy public engagement process, staff's role was to further GMA goals for Fairhaven as an "urban village". Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan identifies Fairhaven as a Tier I Urban Village, but unlike the City's smaller and less pivotal urban villages, the only policies guiding growth in Fairhaven were outdated and no longer relevant. A plan update was sorely needed for Fairhaven to remain compliant with Comprehensive Plan policy.

The role of participants was to stay actively involved in the public input and decision making process, and to maintain open and constructive communication throughout. Staff's approach to the project was unique in that it employed several modalities that helped assist continued healthy discourse, using "listening sessions" and focus groups for more complex issues, in addition to the conventional public meeting format. Staff democratically polled single-family property owners to gauge their willingness to add additional housing types, engaged citizens in the objective analysis of information gained from technical studies, and had participants complete assignments on their own time, using the results for discussion in following sessions.

IV. Description of how and to what extent the plan has been successfully implemented, and the extent of private or public involvement (400 words max)

The FNUVP was adopted by City Council in August, 2012 with wide-spread support from participating stakeholders. Since its adoption, preliminary design review has been completed on three new buildings within or adjacent to the historic district, and architects have reported that the new design standards are easier to use and allow them to design buildings that are compatible, yet are reflective of their own time. Recent tenant improvements requiring design review have also resulted in clearer guidance and improved results.

Involvement in the public engagement process by both private and public sectors was overwhelmingly successful. Sessions were well attended and had wide representation by residents, business owners, property owners, developers, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, employers and employees, residents of adjacent neighborhoods, and others who value and appreciate Fairhaven. The Port of Bellingham was represented and helped to provide a long-range perspective for the industrially-zoned areas.

Public involvement was initiated in December, 2010 with two informal "listening sessions" that helped staff identify the key issues as well as emotionally-charged topics. In May and June of 2011, staff launched the official public engagement process, with broad invitation to a series of five interactive public meetings. To encourage attendance, meetings were held in a neutral location at the neighborhood middle school, and were widely advertised via newspaper, direct mail, notification to neighborhood groups, as well as direct calls to key neighborhood and business group leaders. Each meeting was designed to address a general topic essential to the neighborhood plan: 1) Area Character & Boundaries; 2) Natural Environment, Parks & Recreation; 3) Fairhaven Design Review District and Historic

Resources; 4) Public Realm - Transportation & Streetscapes; and 5) Development Character - Height, Design, Views and Uses. During the sessions, staff balanced the need to provide background information with participants' need for ample time to ask questions, formally provide comment, and discuss ideas.

Prior to the legislative process staff solicited comments, suggestions, and recommendations from the City's Historic Preservation Commission, Transportation Commission, and the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission. These meetings were also well attended by stakeholders, who were given the opportunity to express their support and/or concerns directly to commissioners.

The formal legislative review included a Planning Commission public hearing and four work sessions in April and May of 2012, followed by a City Council public hearing and four more work sessions beginning in June, and the final adoption in August, 2012.

v. Description of how submittal demonstrates compliance with the review criteria

a. Outstanding application of planning principles

The FNUVP citizen involvement process was successful because staff fully embraced the principles of citizen participation, and throughout the two year process actively worked to build public trust by employing a transparent process to build consensus, buy-in and support. One of the main principles behind the concept of public participation is that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. Public participation implies that the public's contribution will influence the decision. City staff understood that the only way to move the Fairhaven project forward was to involve all parties in the planning process, and build trust by actively discovering shared values and creating compromises, despite the very obvious conflicts and disagreements between stakeholders.

Staff initiated the public engagement process by identifying sensitive and emotionally-charged topics, and gathering and evaluating the facts. While the majority of work was completed in-house, outside consultants were brought in to complete a parking study, a historic resource survey, and to provide professional expertise regarding design standards for the historic district and surrounding areas.

Fairhaven's eclectic nature and divergent land uses (for example, residential uses adjacent to industrial and commercial uses) added to the complexity of the neighborhood planning process. The FNUVP project incorporated a unique combination of land use planning, urban infill, and historic preservation, balanced with the natural environment, industry, transportation needs, and a thriving historic commercial district.

The FNUVP balanced resident concerns with protection of public views, preservation of historic resources, the economic needs of disparate businesses, and the concern of land owners and developers that zoning and design standards remain compatible with financial profitability.

b. Implementation of community values

Key to the success of the public engagement process was staff's ability to help stakeholders articulate their shared values, and build consensus about the overarching goal for Fairhaven's future. Residential groups had expressed a desire for compatibility of new construction with the scale and character of historic buildings, and were unimpressed by the design of recent infill construction. Business owners, mainly small-scale retailers and offices, were very concerned about maintaining and enhancing the economic vitality -- and parking availability -- of the core commercial area. Landholders and developers' interests were to maintain appropriate zoning and building standards.

Staff helped participants define shared values early in the process, and used them to create a "policy framework" that would help guide subsequent discussion and ultimately, decisions. The seven shared values identified in the FNUVP include:

1. Preserve and enhance Fairhaven's distinctive and historic character;
2. Fulfill Fairhaven's role as a model vibrant, successful urban village;
3. Protect, restore and preserve the existing natural areas in Fairhaven;
4. Maintain a healthy balance between residential, industrial, commercial and retail sectors;
5. Enhance infrastructure to encourage and support the pedestrian and bicycle-friendly atmosphere;
6. Address traffic, pedestrian safety and parking challenges; and
7. Improve access to the waterfront.

The process culminated in the group reaching consensus that their overarching goal and mission was to *"encourage investment while maintaining Fairhaven's historic character, commercial vitality, and natural scenic beauty."*

c. Contribution to specific planning technologies including emerging technologies such as wireless devices, web-based tools, permit review & tracking systems, etc.

Staff employed a creative approach and used a cadre of advanced planning technologies to help build public consensus regarding height, views, and historic preservation principles. Staff illustrated proposed development scenarios using photographic enhancement, oblique aerial imagery, three-dimensional modeling software, and other Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies. The modeling helped the public envision how various proposed building heights might appear from key vantage points, as well as from the sidewalk, and supported the protection of important public view corridors.

The City's website was extensively used to aid in the dissemination of information and to reinforce transparency of the process. All pre-legislative public comments, documents, meeting materials and summaries were posted on the City website at www.cob.org/fairhaven.

Additionally, two important studies were commissioned as part of the information gathering phase (FNUVP Parking Plan by *Transpo*, and the Historic Resource Survey and Inventory Report by *Artifacts Consulting*, to ensure facts rather than anecdotes would inform the planning process. Using Bellingham's award-winning multimodal traffic

level of service model, the transportation impacts to key area intersections were clearly analyzed under various build-out scenarios.

The final design review boundaries are linked in the City's GIS system -- "City IQ" -- and the regulations are attached to any parcels located in the area, so that when a property owner applies for a permit, it will be clear in which Fairhaven Design Review Area their property lies.

d. Furtherance of Growth Management Act (GMA)

Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan directs the City to plan to accommodate anticipated population growth primarily through infill. The creation of a series of urban villages is a key component of this strategy. Generally, an urban village is an area that:

- Contains a mix of commercial, residential, and service uses;
- Provides amenities and services within walking distance;
- Is designed for pedestrians, bikes, and transit, as well as the automobile;
- Facilitates strong community connections and interaction by serving as a neighborhood focal point and providing active public spaces; and
- Promotes sustainability and quality design.

The Comprehensive Plan designates Fairhaven as a Tier I Urban Village, and as a "District Urban Center", defined as an area designed and intended to serve the entire community while remaining accessible to those living or working nearby. In addition to Fairhaven, other examples of District Urban Centers include the more recently developed, non-historic commercial areas of Sunset Square and Barkley Village.

As a result of staff's effort, the City's first "Urban Village" was brought into equal status as one of the City's modern urban villages with an updated policy framework, a cohesive vision, inspiring land uses and clear, objective standards. Demonstrative of the strength of the plan, the FNUVP withstood an appeal to the Growth Management Hearings Board from a property owner in April, 2013.

The new Fairhaven plan has implemented GMA goals in a way that encourages quality infill while protecting historic resources and a vibrant tourism, retail, and industrial area. The State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has worked closely with City of Bellingham staff over the years to help build public understanding of the important role historic preservation plays in the GMA. City Council's final adoption of the FNUVP, development regulations and design standards is due in large part to City staff's promotion, from the commencement of the citizen involvement process, of GMA Goal 13, to "*Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.*" With strong departmental leadership and support of elected officials, city staff were able to successfully navigate a complicated public engagement process, with positive results that will be evidenced in years to come.

The plan also added additional uses to waterfront industrial parcels that should spur development of long-vacant property, while incorporating the City's recently updated Shoreline Master Program.

e. Suitability of the Solution to the problem or context

Fairhaven was a model urban village, but had not benefited from a full-fledged planning process since the 1980s -- in fact, some of the regulations were drafted by the property owners. Existing design regulations had raised long-standing concerns regarding appropriate building heights, and the imposition of design standards in contrast with actual historic preservation standards for rehabilitation. The large vacant parcels on the waterfront required that the existing zoning to be evaluated given the commercial development potential and updated Shoreline Master Program, while maintaining a working waterfront. Staff realized that a full-scale effort would be required if they were to even begin to attempt to adequately address the multitude of problems,. Fairhaven became a political priority and resources were assigned to the task. A City-led, full scale urban village planning effort, similar to other efforts already completed, was the only appropriate solution.

f. Innovative and/or creative solution to project, demonstration of applicability to other projects

The design review areas and approach was unusual, and could be a model for other commercial districts with some intact historic properties. The design area boundaries reverted back to the original 1977 National Historic District boundary to ensure accurate protection and contextual consideration for any development within that area.

The FNUVP carefully balances historic preservation goals with those of growth and development. Without imposing strict preservation standards for historic buildings, staff built regulations and design standards into each of the Design Review areas so as to respect the historic character of surrounding buildings while allowing for infill to occur and density to increase. Staff built the following considerations into the design standards for the Fairhaven Design Review District:

- Included examples of new construction that had the type of character, features, style and materials of which the public identified they wanted to see more;
- Determined as consensus that they did not want to create "false history" in Fairhaven, but instead wanted new construction to be compatible with (reference in a creative and contemporary way) historic buildings; and
- Established height minimums and maximums (floor to floor) for new development in and adjacent to the Historic District Design Review Area.

g. Difficulty of the Problem or issue addressed, overcoming project obstacles

The history of feuding stakeholder groups, unpopular infill design, and litigation over height and critical areas protection had created a long-standing, hostile divide within the District. The project required coordinated, strategic, authentic, City-led planning in order to have a chance at success. Undoubtedly, some resentments still remain.

There are a number of additional reasons why this was an inherently difficult planning process. The Fairhaven area is a complicated mesh of commercial and industrial lands, with a historical commercial core, and a nearby waterfront with marine-related businesses and terminals for the Alaska Ferry system and the Port of Bellingham, as well as an Amtrak station. The area also transitions rapidly from commercial or industrial

areas to residential, leading to different visions of the future among different stakeholders. As a result, a plan needed to embody historic preservation, create compatibility of new buildings with the old, and reconcile widely divergent preferences among participants regarding building design, height limits, and zoning boundaries. The plan also had to reconcile residential quality of life with a viable tourism industry and retail core, and with current and future industrial and transportation needs.

h. Efficient Use of Budget

The project was completed with very limited resources, especially as compared to other similar planning efforts done in the past. Rather than hiring consultants to do the planning work and run the citizen involvement efforts, the City relied on its wealth of staff expertise. The City was able to leverage a large scale downtown parking study to accomplish the additional Fairhaven parking study. The project's limited resources were spent on conducting the Historic Survey and Inventory, and obtaining limited professional design review guidance from Nore Winters. GIS staff created the view models, and Public Works staff used a Whatcom County Council of Government multi-modal transportation model to conduct the transportation study.

Staff utilized nearby schools and city-owned buildings for public meeting venues, meeting materials were printed in house and all materials were posted on line to aid in electronic distribution.



BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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May 20, 2013

Chair, Awards Committee
Planning Association of Washington
203 Mission Avenue, Suite 107
PO Box 745
Cashmere, WA 98815

Re: Support for the nomination of the City of Bellingham planning staff for the Citizen Involvement Award from the Planning Association of Washington/American Planning Association for the Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan.

Dear Chair, Awards Committee:

The Bellingham City Council wholeheartedly endorses the nomination of the Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Planning process in the category of citizen involvement.

Fairhaven is the oldest section of what eventually became the City of Bellingham. The Fairhaven neighborhood was platted in 1883 and was substantially developed by the end of the 19th century. Its current character as a vibrant and intact historic neighborhood has resulted in a high level of attachment to the area among citizens and business owners. Interest in and concerns about efforts to modernize city plans for the area were extremely high, creating a situation where different visions had ossified into diametrically opposed perspectives. Although Bellingham is a city of neighborhoods with a tradition of local neighborhood planning, planning efforts in Fairhaven had devolved into factionalism which prevented progress for a number of years.

There are a number of additional reasons why this was an inherently difficult planning process. The Fairhaven area is a complicated mesh of commercial and industrial lands, with a historical commercial core, and a nearby waterfront with marine-related businesses and terminals for the Alaska Ferry system and the Port of Bellingham, as well as an Amtrak station. The area also grades rapidly from commercial or industrial areas to residential, leading to different visions of the future among different stakeholders. As a result, a plan needed to embody historic preservation, create compatibility of new buildings with the old, and reconcile widely divergent preferences among participants regarding height limits, design requirements, and zoning boundaries. The plan also had to reconcile residential quality of life with a viable tourism industry and retail core, and with current and future industrial and transportation needs.

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City staff took this project on, with endorsement from the City Council, with the knowledge that the process would be fraught with difficulty. The City provided leadership and vision, listened to stakeholders, and systematically built consensus.

City staff held 25 meetings beginning in 2010 with neighborhood residents, businesses, landowners, and other stakeholders. Detailed design standards were developed and communicated to the public, ensuring that new buildings in or near the historic core would be compatible with existing development. Staff also made best use of planning tools in the public process, in the Planning Commission process, and in Council decision-making, including the use of GIS mapping displays coupled with software to illustrate building heights, allowing staff to simulate in real time the impacts on view corridors of different heights for various portions of the district. Extensive public involvement along with continual adaptation of proposed zoning by staff allowed the project to move through the Planning Commission and City Council legislative process with a growing level of public support.

This process supported a high-quality evaluation of the facts and resulted in a solid final product. The resulting plan balances resident concerns with views and historic preservation, the concerns and needs of disparate businesses, and the concern of land owners and developers that zoning and design standards remain compatible with financial profitability. As a result of this successful effort, the City's first "Urban Village" was brought into equal status as one of the City's modern urban villages with an updated policy framework, a cohesive vision, inspiring land uses and clear, objective standards. The new Fairhaven plan has implemented Growth Management Act goals in a way that encourages quality infill while protecting historic resources and a vibrant tourism, retail, and industrial area. The plan has also added additional uses to large vacant parcels that will spur development. For their exemplary efforts to resolve conflicts and channel different visions into an outstanding outcome, City of Bellingham Planning Staff are highly deserving of such an award. We recommend the project and its outcomes for this award with enthusiasm and no reservations.

Sincerely,



Seth Fleetwood, President
Bellingham City Council



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May 21, 2013

Kelly Larimer and George Steirer, Co-Chairs
APA / PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart St. #610
Seattle, WA 98101

RE: Endorsement of the City of Bellingham for an APA/PAW 2013 Award

Co-Chairs Larimer and Steirer,

The City of Bellingham completed an important neighborhood plan update for the historic Fairhaven district in August 2012 that is worthy of an award from APA/PAW. The Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan (FNUVP) balanced the interests of three community groups to replace a 30 year old neighborhood plan while implementing parts of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. The FNUVP is a clear plan with corresponding development regulations that will guide preservation and infill opportunities in Fairhaven for the next 30 years.

The history is important. Construction of several commercial and mixed-use buildings during 2001 – 2007 created numerous flash points among residents, long term commercial property owners and the City. The outdated 1980 Fairhaven Plan was ill-equipped to review new projects, so confrontation became the primary land use tool, at times resolved only through Superior Court litigation. Meanwhile, the City adopted a new Bellingham Comprehensive Plan in 2006, and then turned its efforts towards updating individual neighborhood plans.

The initial Fairhaven effort was left to the neighborhood association, Fairhaven Neighbors (FN), however their 2007 proposal generated disagreement from several commercial property owners, the merchants association (Old Fairhaven Association, or OFA), and the property owners' parking district (Fairhaven Village Association, or FVA). Discussion groups and mediation sessions from 2008 – 2010 ended with no agreement on a scope of work or planning process.

In December 2010, OFA and FVA petitioned the City to begin work on an Urban Village Plan for the Fairhaven Commercial Core. The City administration responded with a comprehensive work program merging urban village planning into the neighborhood

plan update, both under the City's direction. Staff conducted a series of community workshops during 2011 to provide background data and solicit public input. Several technical reports with detailed documentation were published on the City website. As a result, the planning workshops were well advertised and attended, which produced a diverse set of comments and ideas by the end of 2011. Balancing the diverse input into a cohesive plan compliant with the GMA was the next major challenge.

The Bellingham Planning and Community Development staff responded very well to the challenge while coordinating their work with other City departments and agencies. Planning staff drafted a plan with clear urban infill policies, multi-modal transportation access, open space corridors, residential protection and historic preservation design guidelines. The ensuing review by the Planning Commission and the City Council made some contextual changes, but the overall staff plan was left largely intact, a testimony to staff's ability to balance competing interests. Senior Planner Greg Aucutt, AICP, lead the project during this critical phase in 2012, providing great service to the Planning Commission, the City Council and all Bellingham residents.

During 2010-2012, I was retained as a planning consultant by OFA, FVA and several commercial property owners. I attended all of the community workshops in 2011 and all subsequent hearings throughout 2012. At times my clients disagreed with the staff recommendations. Later we found the staff received our input on an equal basis with other groups participating in the planning process.

Staff relied on the diverse public input to write the FNUVP, design guidelines and accompanying development regulations. Avenues for citizen involvement were always open, especially through the City website documenting staff analysis and proposals. Staff also provided excellent GIS modeling at Council hearings and responded to all questions. Their professional performance overcame substantive challenges and informed the City Council sufficiently to adopt the FNUVP.

Although the Fairhaven planning process had spotty success in its early stages, the professionalism and clarity exhibited during 2012 resulted in an excellent planning document for historic Fairhaven. Bellingham residents and businesses will be well served by the new FNUVP for the next 25-30 years. The City of Bellingham's performance in this effort is well deserving of a joint award from APA/PAW, and I highly recommend the Committee bestow this honor.

Sincerely,



Bill Geyer, AICP
President, Geyer & Associates, Inc.

Bill Geyer, AICP, is a professional planner with over 35 years experience, both in the public sector and as a private consultant. Mr. Geyer's serves residential, mixed-use, commercial and industrial clients in the Pacific Northwest and owns a residential development company.

May 28, 2013

Kelly Larimer and George Steirer, Co-Chairs
APA / PAW Awards Committee
Washington APA Office
603 Stewart Suite 610
Seattle, WA 98101

RE: Endorsement of the City of Bellingham for the APA/PAW 2013 Award

Greetings Co-Chairs Larimer and Steirer;

I am delighted to recommend the City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development staff for the 2013 Joint APA/PAW Award. The staff was outstanding in their work to ensure considerable citizen involvement in the creation of the Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan (FNUVP), development regulations and design standards. Throughout the two-year public engagement process, City staff successfully kept communication open between the conflicted interests of community groups, developers, commercial property owners and merchants. The final product is the result of a successful public process that will help preserve the Fairhaven National Historic District -- an area highly valued by the neighborhood, greater Bellingham, and to Washington State.

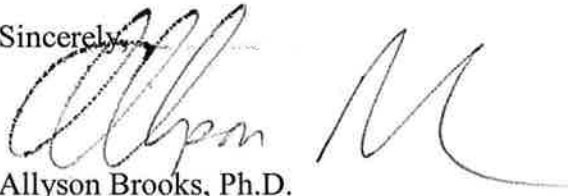
Balancing historic preservation goals with those of growth and development is never an easy task. By 2010, conflicting interests between stakeholders in the Fairhaven Neighborhood had brought communication to a standstill. With direction from City Council, Planning and Community Development staff conceived a citizen involvement strategy that brought previously divergent factions back to the table. Staff employed a creative approach and used a cadre of advanced planning technologies to help build public consensus regarding height, views, and historic preservation principles by illustrating proposed scenarios using photographic enhancement, oblique aerial imagery, three-dimensional modeling software, and other Geographic Information System technologies.

The State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation *has* worked closely with City of Bellingham staff over the years to help build public understanding of the important role historic preservation plays in the Growth Management Act (GMA). City Council's final adoption of the FNUVP, development regulations and design standards is due in large part to City staff's promotion, from the commencement of the citizen involvement process, of GMA Goal #13: "*Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.*" With strong departmental leadership and support of elected officials, the City's Planning and Community Development staff were able to successfully navigate a complicated public engagement process, with positive results that will be evidenced in years to come.



For their exemplary role in resolving conflict and building consensus through an extensive public engagement process, I fully endorse the City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development staff for the 2013 Joint APA/PAW Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allyson Brooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "B".

Allyson Brooks, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Office



EXHIBIT 1

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Numerous stakeholders contributed to the information gathering, analysis and writing of the FNUVP. *A total of 25 public meetings were held.*

Participants included Fairhaven residents and property owners, business owners, employers and employees, residents of adjacent neighborhoods, and many others who use and cherish Fairhaven.



The CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT process

PRE-LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC PROCESS and TECHNICAL STUDIES

All public comments, documents, meeting materials and summaries were posted on the project's webpage at www.cob.org/fairhaven

December 2010
May-June 2011

Two listening sessions were held to assess key concerns and emotionally-charged topics
Five interactive public meetings that generated a SWOT (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*) Analysis to build consensus, define project scope, set boundaries, assess historic resources, identify public spaces and crafted development regulations. On average, 35-43 people attended each of these meetings.

- Meeting 1:** Introduction, Character & Boundaries
- Meeting 2:** Natural Environment, Parks & Recreation
- Meeting 3:** Fairhaven Design Review District and Historic Resources
- Meeting 4:** Public Realm - Transportation & Streetscapes
- Meeting 5:** Development Character - Height, Design, Views and Uses

May 2011

Staff presents draft Design Standards to Historic Preservation Commission, the entity that oversees Fairhaven Design Review

September 2011
August 2011
October 2011

Bike and pedestrian counts were conducted at three key locations in Fairhaven
Staff published a [Public Input Report](#), a compilation of all feedback received to date

- Fairhaven Parking Study completed by *Transpo, Inc.*
- Fairhaven Historic Resource Survey and Inventory Report completed by *Artifacts Consulting*
- City GIS staff gives a public presentation of [3-Dimensional Height and View modeling](#), demonstrating view impacts from key vantage points
- The City's Transportation Planner presents Traffic Analysis and Multimodal LOS Modeling

November 2011
January 2012
Feb/March 2012
February 2012

Staff holds a public meeting to release draft plan, answer questions, and get feedback
Historic Preservation Commission reviews design standards
Transportation Commission reviews parking study and draft plan (three meetings)
Staff holds public meeting to obtain additional feedback on draft plan, development regulations and design standards

March 2012

Staff presents to Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission

LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC PROCESS

The formal legislative review included a Planning Commission public hearing and four work sessions in April and May of 2012, followed by City Council's public hearing, additional work sessions and ultimate approval that occurred in August of 2012.

Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan

City of Bellingham
Planning & Community Development



EXHIBIT 2

CONSENSUS BUILDING EXERCISE

3-DIMENSIONAL MODELING

One of the consensus-building strategies employed by the City's GIS Analyst was to combine existing data layers with photographic images.

The images at left were created and presented at public meetings to help participants visualize impacts to views effected by various proposed building heights, how these could be mitigated by requiring buildings to step back at upper stories.



Harris at 11th Looking North – Photo



Harris at 11th Looking North – 66 Ft Conceptual Buildings



Harris at 11th Looking East



Harris at 11th Looking East – 66 Ft Conceptual Buildings



Mill at 14th Looking West



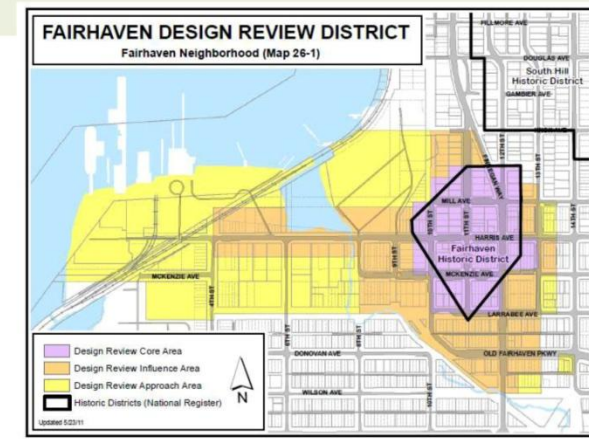
Mill at 14th Looking West – 66 Ft Conceptual Buildings
Upper story step backs at 3rd and 6th floors

Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan

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Fairhaven Design Review District Station 1: CORE HISTORIC DISTRICT AREA



“PRIMARY” HISTORIC BUILDINGS



“SECONDARY” HISTORIC BUILDINGS



RECENT CONSTRUCTION (design review by Historic Preservation Commission)



HISTORICAL REFERENCE (NO LONGER EXTANT)



EXHIBIT 3

CONSENSUS BUILDING EXERCISE

COMPATIBLE INFILL

To gather specific input on what people felt had and hadn't worked under the existing Fairhaven Design Review (established in 1989) staff designed a series of posters, one of which is displayed, at a reduced scale, at left.

Participants were asked to rate and provide comment on examples of historic and recently constructed buildings in Fairhaven. The goal was to help stakeholders clearly identify what it was that they liked -- and didn't like -- about the features, style, massing, and materials of both historic and new Fairhaven buildings.

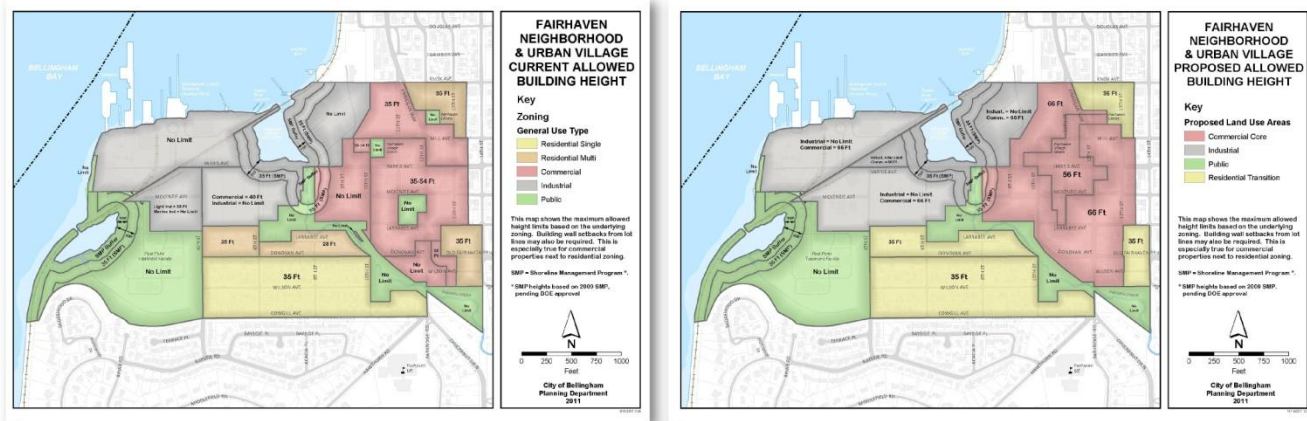
The exercise helped the community articulate and determine consensus regarding the types of new construction they considered compatible for each of the different design review areas.

Fairhaven Neighborhood and Urban Village Plan

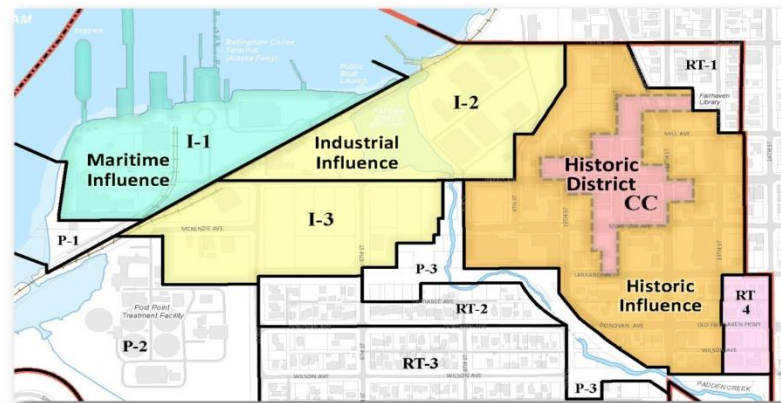
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Draft Fairhaven Design Review Areas



Draft Heights by Design Review Area



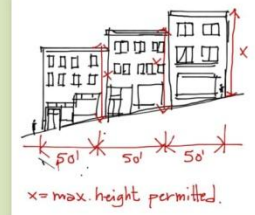
Historic District
 Up to 56' & 4 stories
 ▪ Based on tallest existing historic buildings
 ▪ Height variation required, Reflect traditional commercial modules
 ▪ Maximum height subject to modulation every 50' (see figure)
 ▪ Alignment (with a stair-step pattern on hillsides) of horizontal moldings, cornices.

Historic Influence
 66' and 6 stories max (see three height variations, below)

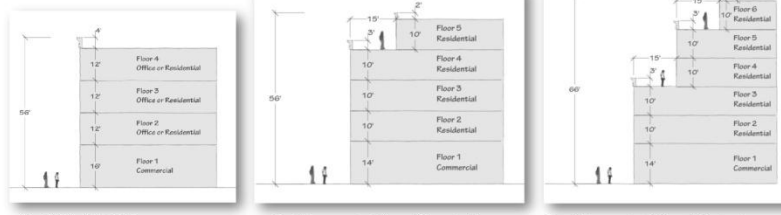
Residential Transition-4
 35' maximum height

Industrial Influence & Maritime Influence
 Commercial Use Buildings: 66' and 6 stories max (see three height variations, below)
 Industrial: no limit

Measuring Height



Measure from sidewalk edge to top of parapet. Buildings over (35') in height must vary additional height at 50' intervals along the street edge. On a slope, could result in a variety of roofline height, stair-stepped at 50' intervals up the hill.



- 1: 56' & 4 stories
- 2: Allow up to 56' and five stories, with a step back of 15' at the 5th floor.
- 3: Allow up to 66' and six stories with 4th and 5th floors stepped back 15', and the 6th floor stepped back an additional 15'

Upper Story Setback Examples



Historical Precedent



EXHIBIT 4

CONSENSUS BUILDING EXERCISE

BUILDING HEIGHT, SCALE, AND MASS

Staff used photographs of historic and recently constructed buildings to help build consensus regarding maximum building heights, scale, and massing.

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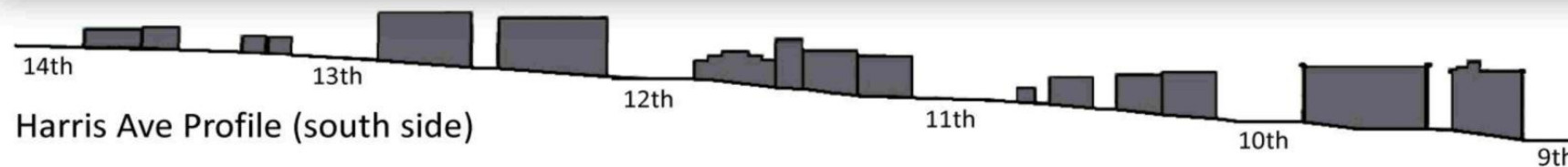
EXHIBIT 5

April 26th 2012

Fairhaven Building Heights (Existing Conditions)



All listed heights from surveys or building plans. Values represent average height of roof parapets above adjacent sidewalks



Harris Ave Profile (south side)

* Fairhaven Gardens site – Measured based on average sidewalk elevation for entire site results in Finnegan St module height of 47.4', middle module height of 35.4' and 11th St module height of 25.4'. Measured based on average sidewalk elevation for each module results in Finnegan St module height of 37', middle module height of 36', and 11th St module height of 34'.



TAKE-HOME EXERCISE

EVALUATING PUBLIC VIEW CORRIDORS and BUILDING HEIGHT

Staff gave participants several take-home exercises, one of which helped them evaluate public view corridors, building height, scale and mass. The assignment questions (below), and the three-dimensional map at left were provided for reference in the field. Instructions were as follows:

Take the 3D Fairhaven Map on a walking field trip to understand the existing built environment in advance of the next session.

Take notes of your findings and bring them back to share on June 22nd, or send in advance to Nicole Oliver at noliver@cob.org.

1. Identify key public view corridors on the map and describe them below.
2. Look at the building heights as marked on the map and notice how the heights change from block to block, and how the topography works with the buildings. Notice building bulk, setbacks, entry accessibility, and how the buildings relate to the street.

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