

The City of Bellingham's Challenge at Woodstock Farm

*prepared for community discussion by the Woodstock Farm Conservancy
and based on the City's original purchase decision*

Problems & Opportunities

Woodstock Farm, purchased in 2004, is a critical link in the City's greenway and trail system, distinguished by its scenic qualities and its unique location on a wild and scenic part of the Whatcom County's marine shoreline.

The property includes 6 historic buildings and a "grandfathered" boathouse. Most, and perhaps all, of these buildings have broad potential for public enjoyment if they are preserved and adapted for the right set of contemporary community uses. In their present status the buildings present an obstacle to the improvement of the site for greater public enjoyment and require ongoing City attention and maintenance resources.

As with many recent open space purchases the City acted wisely and quickly to conserve a unique site and its role in a public greenway system, rather than basing its purchase decision on developing the site for intense public uses. In so doing the City knowingly purchased a site with limited opportunities for accommodating traditional private automobile access. Along with driveway modification, it appears that between 30 and 50 auto parking stalls may be provided at Woodstock if the City is to preserve the character of the site and abide by principals of minimal clearing, paving and scenic impacts on the bay shoreline. (This question needs to be addressed by the community and during preliminary site planning work.)

The City's acquisition of Woodstock was contingent upon reserving its ability to demolish most or all of the buildings, in preference to spending taxpayer funds for improving them to modern building standards and for providing alternative transportation services and improvements to overcome vehicular access constraints.

City staff and officials have recognized the opportunities, historical significance and community values vested in the Farm's buildings. They have also expressed interest in considering a "partnership" with an outside party which would improve and manage the buildings for community-oriented uses that are compatible with public enjoyment of an accessible but carefully conserved open space, heritage and park site.

The Woodstock Farm Conservancy is committed to preserving the cultural as well as the natural resources of Woodstock. It envisions assisting the City with management of the Farm's public open space and enriching the public's experience understanding and enjoyment of the site and its history, by managing and renovating Woodstock's buildings and providing ongoing programs to support the site and serve the public.

For more information please contact woodstockfarmconservancy@yahoo.com