

OLD TOWN URBAN VILLAGE PLAN

City of Bellingham, Washington



Planning & Community Development Department
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Prepared by the City of Bellingham Planning & Community Development Department, with assistance from GGLO Inc., Artifacts, AHBL, Property Counselors and Christensen Design Management.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Purpose of the Plan	5
1.2 Relationship to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan	5
1.3 The Planning Process	6
1.3.1 Related Planning Processes	6
1.3.2 Public Investment	7
1.3.3 Old Town Planning Process	7
1.4 Context	8
1.4.1 Natural and Historic Setting	8
1.4.2 Old Town Today	11
1.4.3 Redevelopment Potential	11
2. VISION	13
2.1 Framework Policies	14
3. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER	15
3.1 Development Character Policies	15
3.1.1 Land Use Policies	15
3.1.2 Building Design Policies	17
3.1.3 Site Design Policies	18
3.2 Development Character Implementation Strategies	20
4. CIRCULATION, STREETSCAPE AND PARKING	23
4.1 Circulation, Streetscape and Parking Policies	24
4.1.1 Circulation Policies	24
4.1.2 Streetscape Policies	24
4.1.3 Parking Policies	27
4.2 Circulation, Streetscape and Parking Implementation Strategies	27
5. PARKS, PLAZAS AND WATER CONNECTIONS	31
5.1 Parks, Plazas and Water Connections Policies	32
5.2 Parks, Plazas and Water Connections Implementation Strategies	32
6. CAPITAL FACILITIES	37
6.1 Capital Improvement Program	37
6.1.1 Initial Phase	37
6.1.1 Future Phases	39

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This document provides a policy framework for managing growth and development in Bellingham's Old Town district, and for preserving and enhancing its natural and historical resources. The Plan's purpose is to guide development toward thoughtful redevelopment that achieves the vision for Old Town. It will be used to help reclaim and revitalize this historic and underutilized area of Bellingham's City Center.

The goals and policies within this document are applicable to only those

areas within the Old Town Boundary, see Old Town Sub-Area Plan map on Page 6. While important, implementing policies and strategies affecting adjacent neighborhoods would require neighborhood plan amendments.

1.2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE 2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2005. The Plan calls for the creation of urban villages, or centers to accommodate the City's anticipated growth. Urban centers are to provide a pleasant living, shopping and working environment; pedestrian accessibility; adequate well-located open spaces; attractive, well-connected street systems; and a balance of retail, office, residential and public uses (FLU-18).

The Comprehensive Plan's Framework Urban Center Policies call for urban centers to:

- Have an appropriate mix of commercial, service and residential uses,
- Maintain the character and livability of adjacent residential neighborhoods,
- Serve as a neighborhood focal point,
- Attract and encourage non-motorized trips,
- Include a central park, plaza village green or other public space, and
- Minimize the impacts of parking.



The Comprehensive Plan directs that Master plans be developed for each of the proposed urban centers (Policy FLU-18). Each plan must specify land uses and densities, street and utility layouts, lot arrangements, housing types, village square or plaza locations, streetscape amenities, the relationship of buildings to the street, parking structures or lots, protection of critical areas, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and other items deemed necessary to ensure compatibility with surrounding areas.

Old Town is identified in the Comprehensive Plan as a priority urban village and one that requires additional regulatory changes in

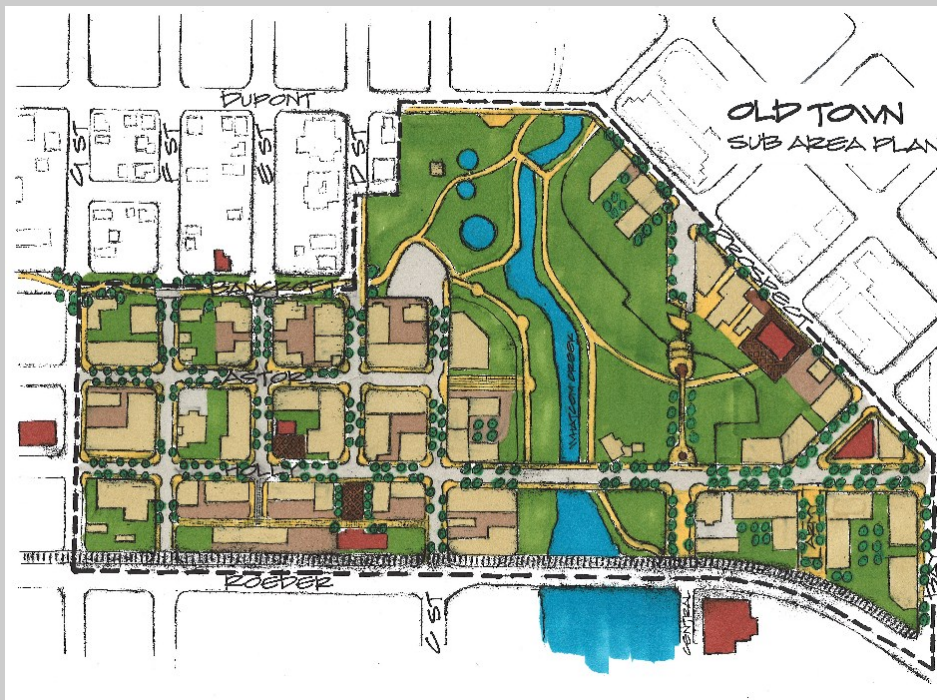
order for redevelopment to occur.

1.3. THE PLANNING PROCESS

1.3.1 Related Planning Processes

Old Town has been the subject of several community plans for more than a decade. Those plans include the:

- Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) report,
- Whatcom Creek Waterfront Action Program (WCWAP),
- Downtown Development Workshop recommendations,
- City Center Master Plan (CCMP), and the
- Community Forum on Growth Management.



***Boundary** The Old Town Sub-Area Plan boundary follows Roeder Avenue at Bay Street north to G Street east to Bancroft, south to D Street, east following Maritime Heritage Park to Dupont Street, south to Prospect, south to Bay Street and west to Roeder .*

These planning efforts involved various forms of community input and involvement. Each process identified Old Town as an underutilized area and a vital link between the Central Business District, the waterfront and adjacent residential neighborhoods. The Community Growth Forum Report recommended that Old Town be a priority 'urban village'. Preservation of neighborhood character, historic resources and public views have been identified as priorities for the area.

1.3.2 Public Investment



Since 1996, local business owners, many community organizations and the City of Bellingham have been working to implement WCWAP. Nearly \$8 million dollars in local, state and federal funds have been invested in Old Town over the

last 10 years. Public improvements focused on improving amenities such as Maritime Heritage Park, streetscapes along Central and Holly, Holly Street Landfill cleanup and restoration of Whatcom Creek estuary. Minimal private sector investment has followed public investment to date. As with urban centers region-wide, markets for mixed use, urban infill, and redevelopment are maturing. Since 2004, property transactions within the Old Town area indicate a level of interest in redevelopment, yet the Neighborhood Plan is outdated for this area and does not reflect the new goal of establishing an urban village.

1.3.3 Old Town Planning Process

The City hosted several community meetings in 2005 and 2007 to seek input about how Old Town should redevelop in the future. During these meetings the public identified Old Town's character-defining features, view corridors and vistas. They discussed preferred land uses, building heights and building designs. Several ideas generated from these meetings were used to update the City Center Design Standards and Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan in 2006.

This Plan is the culmination of these public processes. Following this introduction, Old Town's rich natural and historic context is described followed by the public vision for Old Town in the future. Policies and implementation strategies for Old Town's Development Character,

Circulation, Streetscape and Parking, and Parks and Plazas are then articulated in greater detail, providing specific guidance for new development.

1.4. CONTEXT

1.4.1 Natural and Historic Setting

Whatcom Creek has for centuries been the most attractive area for human presence on Bellingham Bay. Consequently, Old Town has a rich archaeological area in the city. Fresh water, shelter and abundant salmon attracted native peoples and the creek was a watering stop for early European exploring expeditions, sailors, whalers and fur traders.

In December of 1852, the creek attracted the area's first settlers intent on harnessing the falls to drive sawmill blades. Indian treaty wars, a gold rush and political boundary disputes all left marks on the fledgling efforts to build a township around the mouth of Whatcom Creek.

Distinctly within the urban downtown Bellingham area, Old Town clings for definition to its natural setting. Its boundaries are for the most part determined by natural edges - edges between land and water and between uplands and lowlands. The district largely fits within a half bowl landform that rises from the course of Whatcom Creek on all sides except the west, where it is open to Bellingham Bay.

The "Old Town" of Whatcom was situated below the natural bluff on the north side of

Whatcom Creek beginning in the 1850s. On top of the bluff a block houses were built as well as Captain George Pickett's house in 1856. This was a high point topographically for viewing incoming ocean going vessels. Most of the early buildings were of wood construction with the majority erected during the Fraser River Gold Rush, including the brick 1858 T. G. Richards supply house that still is standing today. Once the Holly Street viaduct was constructed, Old Town expanded to include the buildings on the south side of the creek just before the border of the town of Sehome.

Bellingham's Front Door

The deeper water in the channel of



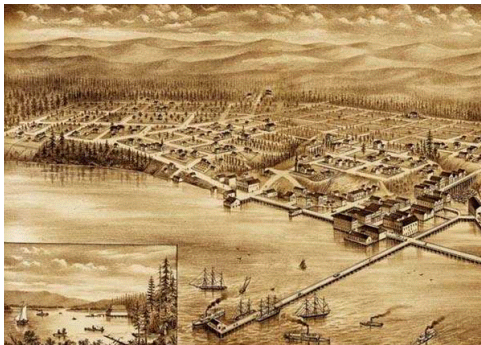
Whatcom Creek accommodated the largest vessels visiting Bellingham Bay and helped to establish Old Town as the primary point of entry into the city. For decades the Colony Wharf, which ran from Whatcom Falls directly out along the creek channel to deep water, was the

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

main entry portal into the city. The Colony Pier axis with Holly Street marked the historic centerpoint of Bellingham. The Holly Street crossing of Whatcom Creek is the perceived epicenter of Old Town.

Early in the twentieth century, the creek channel was dredged and a formal



passenger terminal for ferry service was built on pilings at mid channel. The terminal, which became Citizen's Dock, faced onto Roeder Avenue where it was outside the arching viaduct of the busy Great Northern rail line. Later, the Great Northern Passenger Depot was built

just north of Whatcom Creek. Together, the two passenger arrival points reinforced Old Town's role as Bellingham's front door. Visitors, immigrants, tourists and returning locals all fed the Holly Street corridor where one of the city's busiest streetcar lines operated.

Early Years

The street grid and building lot patterns of Old Town reflect its early years as a town built over mudflats on long piers reaching from the foot of the shoreline bluff to deep water. The heart of Old Town was burned in a fire in 1885, destroying 17 buildings. With the mudflats becoming buried under layers of landfill, increasingly larger buildings were constructed, and the stilted character of streets and sidewalks gave way to graded rights of way and streetscapes that blended smoothly into the neighboring commercial and residential areas.

At the turn of the twentieth century, lower Holly Street just north of the Whatcom Creek Bridge hosted an opera house, several hotels, restaurants, saloons, markets and retail shops. Upper floors accommodated newcomers and waterfront workers. Along Astor and Bancroft streets between Holly Street and the bluff, smaller residential buildings and houses sat intermittently amid industrial yards and plank workshops. The northern banks of the creek were given over to water-dependent business mostly related to timber milling and wood products. Construction below the bluff was light framed lumber on shallow pilings built without stone or masonry foundations.

Historic Buildings and View Points

The bluff (along Prospect St) created an early platform for the city's most prominent public buildings, including City Hall (1892). The looming drama of formidable architectural landmarks built along the crest of the bluff was an impressive and memorable attribute of Old Town, particularly for people arriving by water or rail for the first time. Today, the topographical contrast continues to create important views and visual perspectives, particularly in regard to the landmark Old City Hall building.

Character Shift

As the automobile, surface roads and state highways took over as the most common system of transportation, Old Town faded as Bellingham's arrival point. By the mid 1920s, large areas were filled to extend the shoreline further into the bay on both sides of Whatcom Creek. Ambitious industrial facilities with large workforces began dominating the bay's shoreline and Old Town's character shifted to reflect its transitional role between the downtown's commercial district and the working waterfront.

By the late 1930s, the streetcar line had disappeared and Holly Street and Roeder Avenue became busy industrial routes for both cars and heavy trucks. The wood frame architecture north of the creek deteriorated rapidly and the busy urban landscape thinned to just a few sturdy masonry buildings, such as the Great Northern Railroad Station. As the wood

frame structures disappeared, so did the lot lines. Blocks were consolidated into open industrial yards and building sites for warehouses and simple steel frame industrial buildings.

1.4.2 Old Town Today

Today, Old Town is bordered by Bellingham's downtown to the south, the Lettered Streets and Columbia neighborhoods to the east and north, and the waterfront and Bellingham Bay to the west.

Present densities within Old Town are low. Old Town today is interspersed with vacant land, large footprint industrial structures, parcels of public open space and a relatively low residential population. Little in the way of new uses,



quality new construction or targeted adaptive reuse and preservation has occurred in Old Town compared to other areas in Bellingham.

2022.

Old Town has a number of existing attributes that make it a great urban village candidate:

- Existing street grid layout
- Variety of topography and land forms
- Historic structures and history
- Proximity and connection to Downtown, Waterfront and Lettered Streets and Columbia Neighborhoods
- Existing diverse uses
- Underdeveloped with large parcels under single ownership
- Existing parks and open space
- Served by public transit
- Proximity to schools and services
- Existing infrastructure and recreational areas
- Whatcom Creek

1.4.3 Redevelopment Potential

All parcels in Old Town were evaluated for potential redevelopment, based upon physical characteristics of the lots, condition of existing structures, size of lot under single ownership and redevelopment interests of property owners.

Utilizing this analysis, it is estimated that between 860 and 1120 housing units, and up to 400,000 square feet of commercial space could be added by

2. VISION

The Old Town area is envisioned as a community in which people can live, work, and play. It's designed to maintain important characteristics such as view corridors and vistas, natural features, historic resources, small businesses and yet provide for additional housing and business opportunities. Old Town is envisioned as an 'urban village' that nearby residents of downtown and Lettered Streets call their own.

Old Town is a place that preserves and respects its historic features. The Old City Hall (Whatcom Museum), Territorial Courthouse, Great Northern Passenger Station, Oakland Block, Lottie Roth Block, and Pickett House are area highlights. Some of the remaining historic buildings are situated so as to create terminal views – "views to the past" – thereby garnering the area's historic context a more significant presence.

Historically, development in Old Town has been marked by maritime, railroad, light industrial, downtown commercial, residential, and marine estuary influences. The area has experienced many changes over time that are reflected in the character and diversity of building and infrastructure. Residents and users have expressed a strong interest in preserving and enhancing the unique characteristics of this diverse area. A diverse mix of uses will be encouraged to emphasize and build upon the eclectic



nature that exists today. People envision live/work and artist studios, theatres, antique shops, cafes and restaurants, theatres, maritime uses, and a variety of housing opportunities.

What has always drawn people to this area is its connection to the water from Whatcom Creek to the Bay. Strong pedestrian connections to the waterway and waterfront redevelopment area draw people to enjoy the water. Whatcom Creek and Maritime Heritage Park, another area treasure, continues to serve as a respite and trail link to nearby neighborhoods.

Pre-automobile, Old Town was a busy, bustling place where people lived in or nearby and walked to work, shop, have a drink, or see a show. In honor of this tradition, design guidelines and public amenities will ensure new development will have strong pedestrian focus creating better connections within the area, and to downtown, the waterfront, and the Lettered Streets Neighborhood.

pedestrian by providing active streetscape uses, and a safe, convenient, and interesting network of walkable streets,

- Ensure new development responds to view corridors, landmark buildings, and the natural environment,
- Provide a level of predictability for stakeholders within and outside Old Town, and
- Encourage redevelopment to occur in Old Town.

2.1. FRAMEWORK POLICIES

- Encourage a healthy mix of diverse and eclectic residential and commercial uses,
- Guide development to engage the



CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

3. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

Old Town falls within the purview of the City Center Design Standards (CCDS). However, building and site design guidelines that are specific to Old Town should be developed to ensure new development has a strong pedestrian focus.

3.1. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER POLICIES

3.1.1 *Land Use Policies*

1. Allow a mix of residential and commercial uses in Old Town to make the district a desirable place to live, work and play.
2. Require ground floor commercial uses along Holly Street, Bay Street, Prospect Street, and Champion Street.
3. Encourage the development of below grade and under building structured parking.
4. Allow for small handicraft, marine, and manufacturing uses, but discourage large industrial uses that are incompatible with residential and pedestrian dominated environments.
5. Preserve and highlight landmark buildings to the greatest extent possible.



Landmark buildings

Significant evidence of Bellingham's early history survives in several landmark buildings located in Old Town. In regards to the Old Town Sub-area Plan, a "Landmark" building is defined as a building, structure, or site identified through a public visioning process as having historical, aesthetic, or cultural significance to the character of Old Town. There are a number of historically significant or potentially eligible historic properties within Old Town that are not shown here.



Lottie Roth Block



Pickett House



Territorial Courthouse



Great Northern Passenger Station



Old City Hall



Oakland Block



Granary Building

Financial incentives for historic buildings: Some of the Landmark buildings that were identified through the public process are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (administered by the National Park Service). National Register listing may make properties eligible for State and federal grants, federal tax credits, and building code relief.

A few of the Old Town Landmark buildings have additional designation of being listed in the Bellingham Historic Register (administered by the City of Bellingham). This listing offers incentives to owners through Special Tax Valuation, Adaptive Use Permits and building code relief.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

3.1.2 Building Design Policies

1. The City Center Design Standards and design review process should be employed.
2. Buildings heights should be lower in priority view corridors and when adjacent to certain landmark buildings and Whatcom Creek.
3. Design buildings to allow light to the street and create a human scale at the street edge by requiring an upper story setback.
4. Stoops and porches should be incorporated into buildings with ground floor residential uses.
5. Include modulation on the face of buildings and in rooflines to break up building bulk and long walls and rooflines.
6. Celebrate building corners with unique design features at Prospect, Central, Whatcom Creek, and F Streets where they intersect with Holly Street.
7. Merge modern materials of the present with traditional building forms from the past to reference the historic Old Town.
8. Create an active edge along Old Village Trail, Maritime Heritage Park and public plazas by incorporating access, activity areas and interesting



design features into new and redeveloped buildings.

9. Establish building heights such that:

- Priority public views to the water are identified and maintained.
- New construction does not overpower landmark buildings.
- Redevelopment opportunities become feasible and more desirable.
- The scale of buildings creates a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Quality new construction and structured parking are feasible.
- Buildings step down as they approach Whatcom Creek estuary.
- A clear unobstructed view of Whatcom Museum along Astor Street is maintained.

3.1.3 Site Design Policies

1. Design sites to create an interesting pedestrian environment.
2. Discourage surface parking lots, but when required they should be located behind the building.
3. Locate buildings adjacent to sidewalks except where setback to accommodate plazas, outdoor dining, wider sidewalks or to highlight building entrances. Building setbacks may be particularly desirable along Holly Street to accommodate these amenities.

4. Locate eateries, outdoor cafes and plazas on the southwest to maximize light, warmth and comfort.

3.2. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. Develop a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) system with maximum height

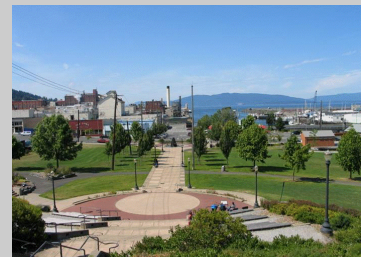


Height Sensitive Areas

Noteworthy vistas and view corridors contribute to Old Town's character. Preservation of these views was identified as a priority by the public. Priority public view corridors include:

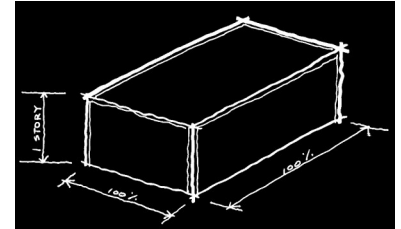
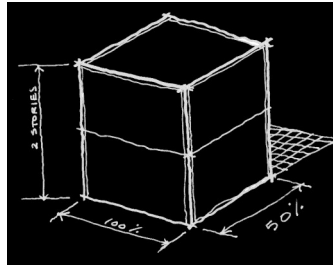
- F Street View to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Astor Street View Corridor to Whatcom Museum
- D Street View to Great Northern Passenger Depot
- Dupont Street Overlook view out Whatcom Waterway to Bellingham Bay
- Maritime Heritage Park Overlook view out Whatcom Waterway to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Museum Overlook view to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Holly Street view Corridor to St. Paul's Church

Height limits should be reduced adjacent to the one story Territorial Courthouse and Great Northern Passenger Depot.



limits.

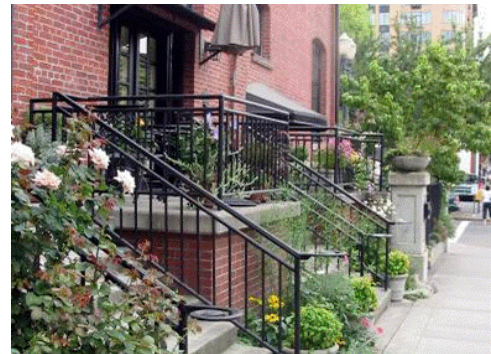
2. Incorporate a FAR bonus system to allow increases in FAR in exchange for the creation or preservation of public amenities such as affordable housing, and construction of LEED™/Built Green certified buildings.
3. Restrict height limits within identified view corridors.
4. Investigate the possibility of forming a public/private partnership to preserve the Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot and make it accessible to the public. The timber framed freight house, adjacent to the train station, could convert to affordable artist studios or work places.
5. Solicit redevelopment proposals for residential and commercial opportunities at the City owned property (600 W Holly) in an effort to activate Maritime Heritage Park and promote redevelopment.
6. Adopt development regulations and design standards that are consistent with and implement the policy recommendations of this urban village plan.



Floor Area Ratio Definition: The gross floor area of a building (s) on a site divided by the site area.

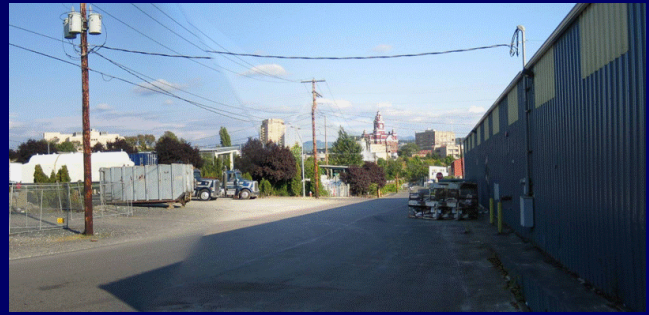
For example, if the building above has a total of 10,000 SF and the site area is 10,000 SF, then the FAR would be 1.0.

If you know the FAR and you want to calculate how much gross floor area one could build, multiply the FAR (1.0) by the site area (10,000 SF).



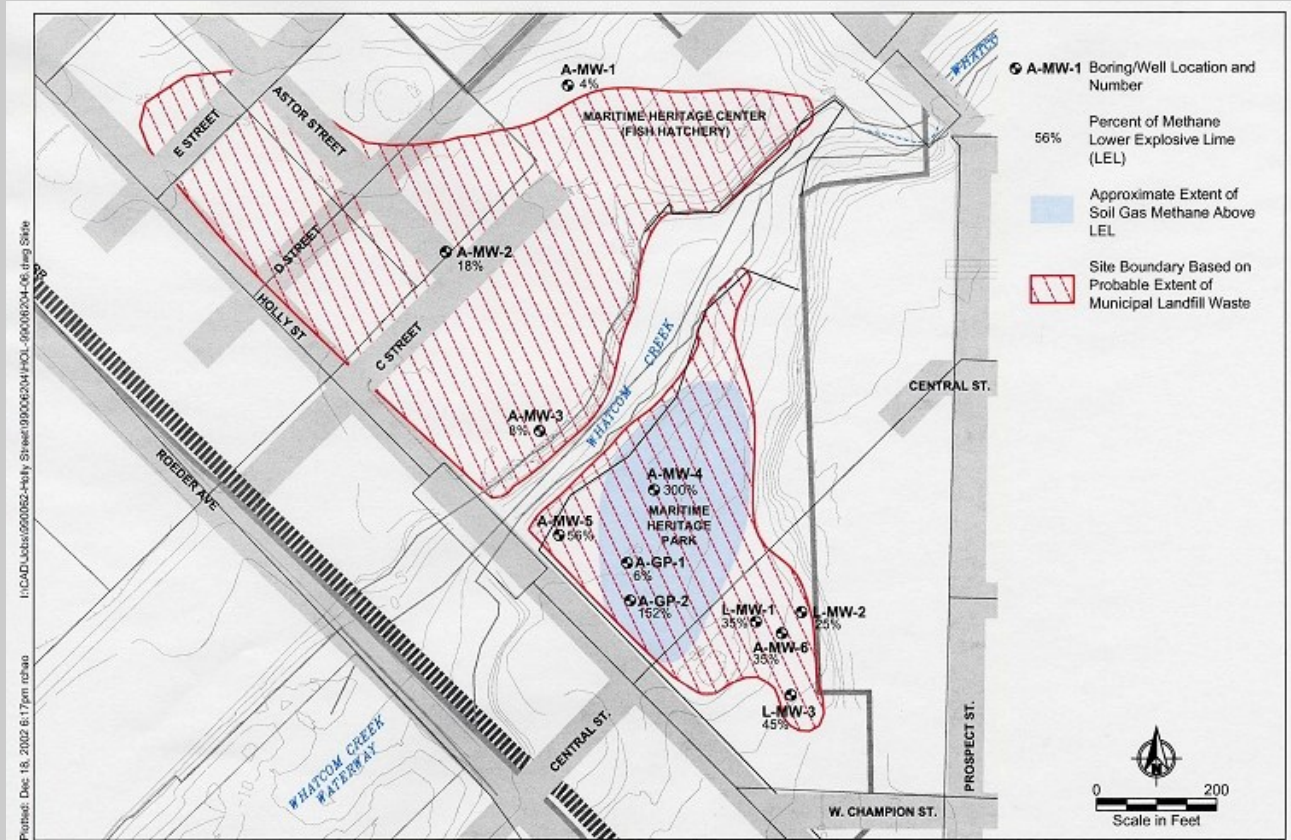
Astor Street View Corridor

The Old City Hall, Whatcom Museum, is an important landmark building in Old Town. Clear unobstructed views of it should be preserved from the west sidewalk as redevelopment occurs along Astor Street by stepping buildings back and selecting appropriate street trees.



Holly Street Landfill Boundary

The 13-acre Holly Street Landfill is regulated by the Department of Ecology under a Consent Decree with the City and other property owners. Restrictive covenants on all the properties within the landfill boundary require certain measures be followed to protect human health and the environment.



CHAPTER FOUR

CIRCULATION, STREETSCAPE AND PARKING

4. CIRCULATION, STREETSCAPE AND PARKING

The existing street grid layout with small blocks and multi-modal connections provides excellent networks for access and circulation. Old Town's proximity to downtown, waterfront and Lettered Streets and Columbia Neighborhoods, as well as public transportation service along Holly, Champion and Dupont streets, keeps Old Town well connected to other parts of the City. However, certain improvements to corridors and connections are needed to enhance pedestrian access and create a safe, convenient, and interesting network of walkable streets.

Pedestrian connections within Old Town that need to be enhanced include the Old Village Trail, the non-arterial streets and connections to the waterfront. The Old Village Trail is envisioned to be primarily for foot traffic and bicyclists with minimal interruption from local vehicular traffic.

Connections to the waterfront at the railroad crossing on F, C and Central streets need improvement. Wayfinding signs along the trails leading to Old Town would strengthen connections between Old Town and residential neighborhoods to the north and east.

The street right-of-ways within the Old Town area account for 18 of the 53 total acres. The streets serve the purpose of moving vehicles but also become an important part of the public realm as residential densities increase. As there are many demands on this real estate, the



street design should reflect the differences between arterials and non-arterials with an emphasis on creating a multi-modal transportation system.

As Old Town becomes more walkable, adequate parking needs to be provided in a manner that does not detract from the desire to create a pedestrian-oriented streetscape. A high priority should be placed on creating shared parking facilities since they have a greater capacity than single use reserved parking. Striking a balance between wider sidewalks for the pedestrian and on street parking is critical.

4.1. CIRCULATION, STREETScape AND PARKING POLICIES

4.1.1 Circulation Policies

1. Follow Old Village Trail Plan guidelines when redeveloping property along the Bancroft Street right-of-way to promote and enhance it as a pedestrian and bicycle connection.
2. Incorporate pedestrian-friendly interfaces within redevelopment properties along the Old Village Trail with features such as an entries and windows.
3. Street right-of-ways should not be vacated.
4. Maintain the two-way street system.
5. Provide safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle crossings over the train tracks and as many connections to the waterfront as feasible.
6. Fire access staging should be on street rights-of-ways. The primary

fire access streets are Holly, Astor, Prospect and Bay. Along Astor street where the drive lanes are only 10 feet wide, the staging area should be incorporated at the mid-block with driveway access.

7. Driveway access should be from the non-arterials when feasible.
8. Bike routes should be developed on Roeder and Dupont for through traffic.
9. Transit stops should be conveniently spaced and prioritized over on-street parking.

4.1.2 Streetscape Design Policies

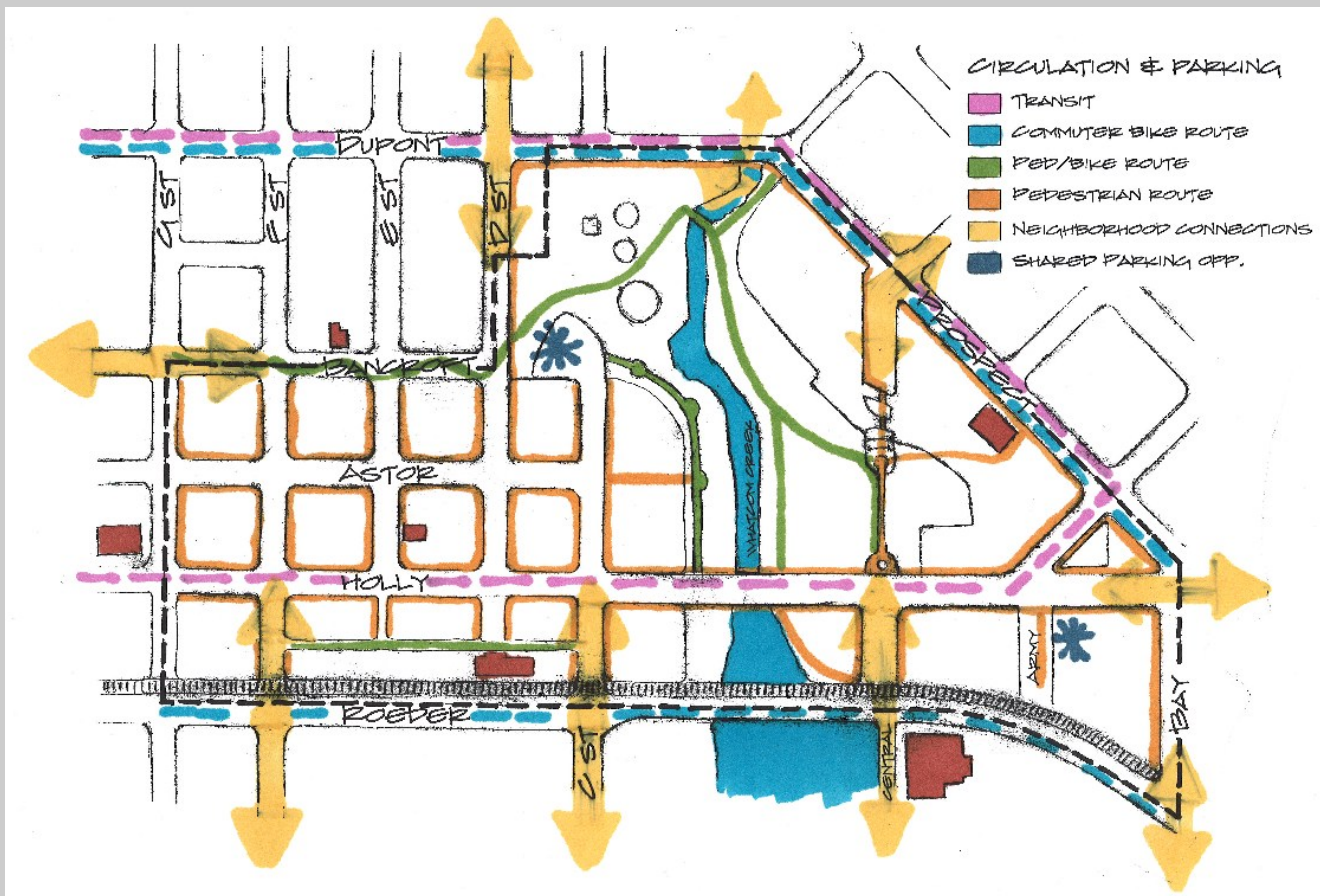
1. Preserve the street grid to maintain public view corridors to landmark buildings and the Bay.
2. Install pedestrian improvements, such as wider sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, street furnishings, and street trees.
3. Property and business owners should weed, sweep and provide general maintenance in sidewalk areas.
4. Select street trees that minimize impacts to views such as columnar species.
5. Continue Central Avenue/Holly Street design details throughout the Old Town area. Details include street lamps, tree wells, concrete paving and brick paving.
6. Prospect and Bay Street represent a transition to the Arts District and should incorporate design standards established for the Arts District.

CHAPTER FOUR

CIRCULATION, STREETScape AND PARKING

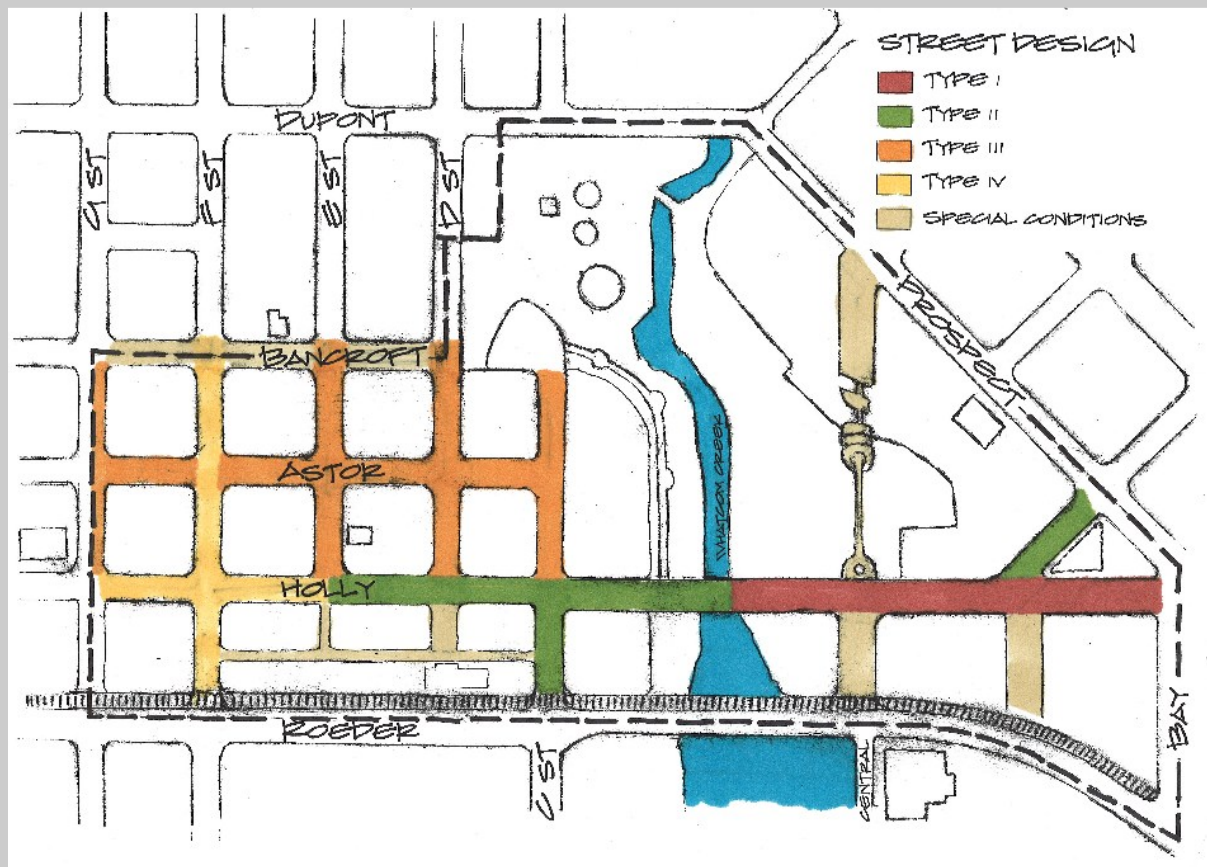
Circulation and Shared Parking Opportunities

A emphasis is placed on creating a multi-modal transportation system. Old Town is well connected and easily accessible to nearby neighbors. Shared parking opportunities (structures) exist where sites are already in public ownership.



Street Design

Old Town has an existing network of streets that should not be vacated. Holly Street and F Street are main arterials serving the area and the greater City and should be maintained. Other streets within the area should be designed for local access. The right-of-way widths vary between 60 feet and 80 feet and, therefore, the street design will vary.



CHAPTER FOUR

CIRCULATION, STREETScape AND PARKING

7. Incorporate stormwater features that are compatible with attractive pedestrian environment when appropriate and feasible.
8. Incorporate weather protected transit shelters.
9. Provide distinct artistic features in areas such as the Holly Street Bridge.

4.1.3 *Parking Policies*

1. Reduce existing parking requirements to a standard that is appropriate for an urban village.
2. Create on-street parking for visitors and customers, and discourage on-site surface parking lots.
3. Consider establishing a Residential Parking Zone in adjacent neighborhoods if the spillover from Old Town to nearby residential areas becomes problematic.
4. When feasible, use shared parking facilities to promote and encourage the development of commercial/office uses.
5. Consider public/private partnership opportunities for shared parking structures.

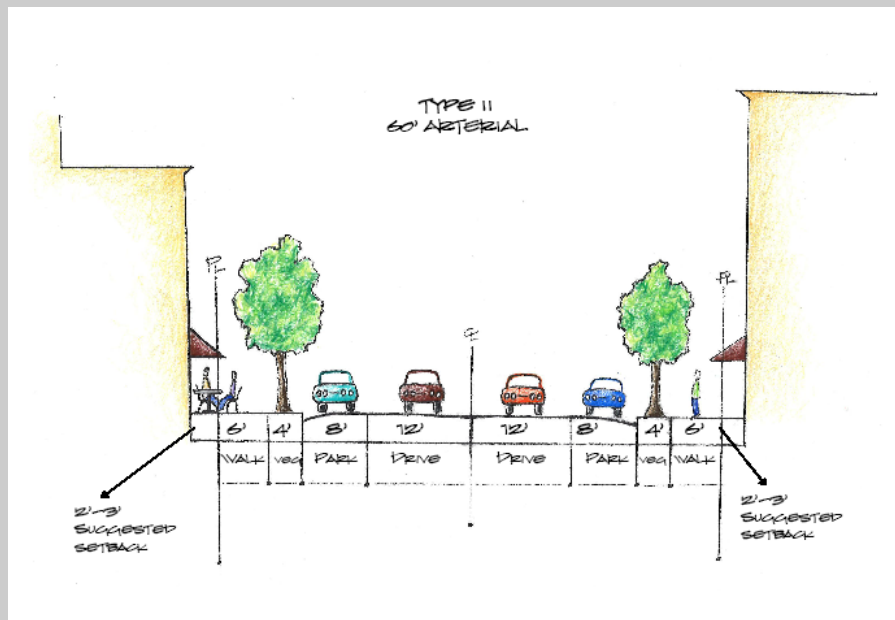
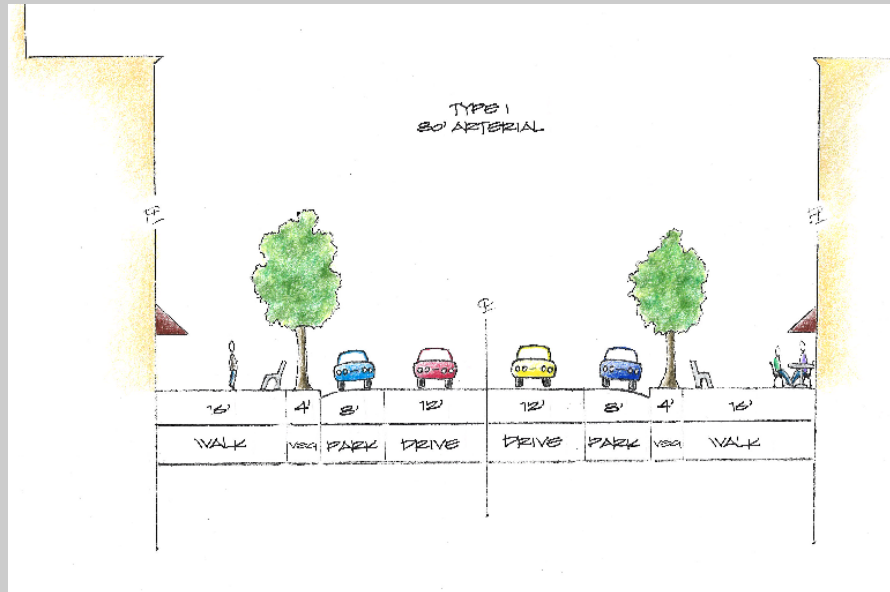
4.2. **CIRCULATION, STREETScape AND PARKING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

1. Install a special sidewalk pattern, artistic feature, and pedestrian crossing at Holly and D Street to connect the Train Station, Historic Courthouse and the Picket House

- to celebrate Old Town's history.
2. Coordinate with the waterfront planning to improve the intersections at Roeder and F Street, C Street and Central Avenue to provide safer pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle crossings.
3. Create a pedestrian and bicycle connection through the 600 W. Holly site (former Astor Street right-of-way) to the boardwalk along Whatcom Creek.
4. Maintain a visual connection (at a minimum) at Army Street to the waterfront looking south from Holly.
5. Install physical constraints on Bancroft Street to allow only low speed local motor vehicle access (residents, visitors, and service vehicles), and post signs warning entering motorists of the street's unique characteristics.
6. Require new development to bring sidewalks and streets up to recommended standards.
7. Property and business owners should create a streetscape maintenance program.

Type I and Type II Streets

Holly Street is the main arterial serving the area. It should be maintained as an arterial and have a 12 foot wide drive lane. The cross sections below do not reflect intersection design where left turn lanes may be required. These cross sections should be used as a guide for setting street standards for the area.

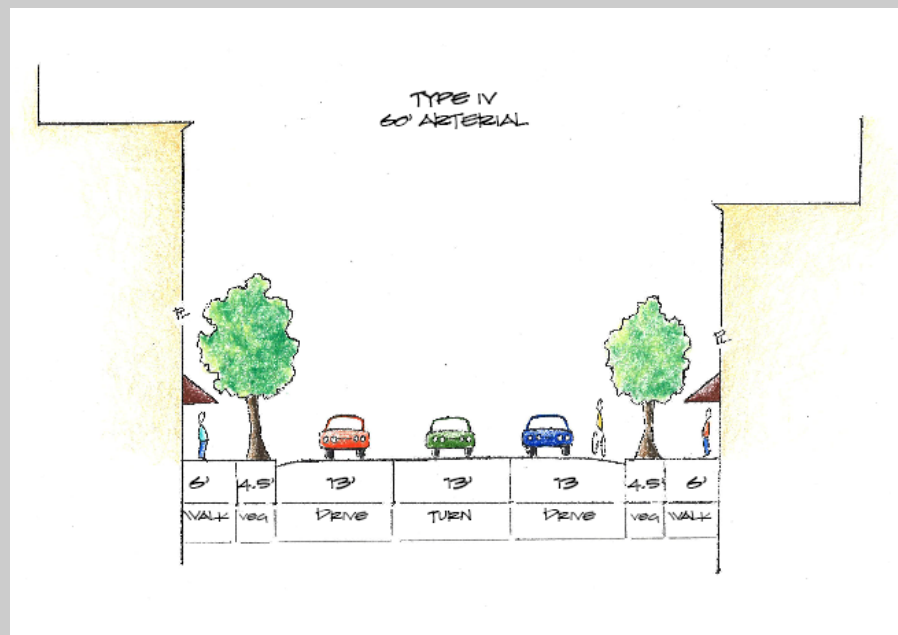


CHAPTER FOUR

CIRCULATION, STREETSCAPE AND PARKING

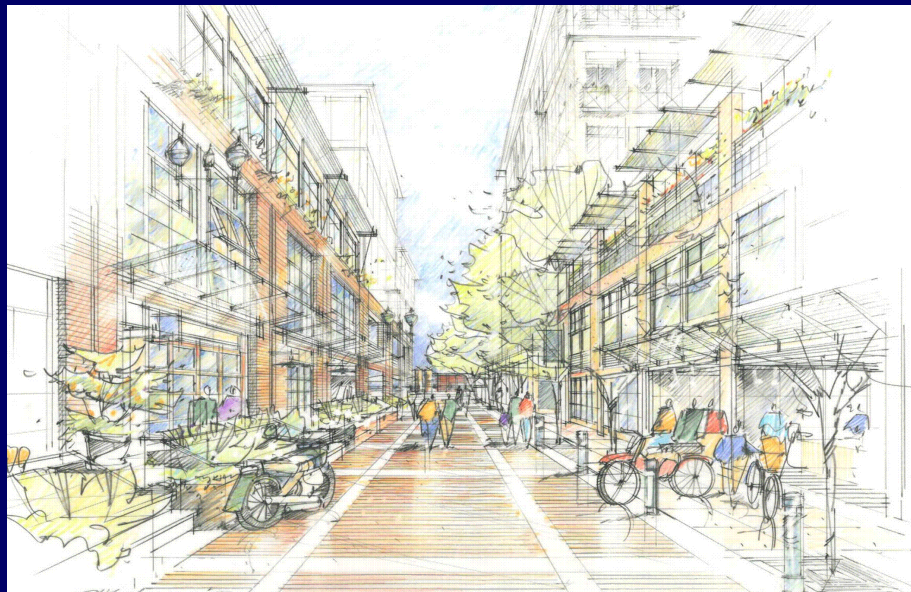
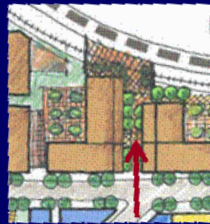
Type III and Type IV Streets

The Type III non-arterial streets (local) should maximize sidewalks and on-street parking and the drive lanes should be reduced to encourage slow-moving traffic. Type IV cross section illustrates the intersection at Holly and F Streets where turn lanes are needed. A minimum of 10 foot sidewalks should be installed to promote safe and comfortable pedestrian routes to the waterfront area. Cross sections should be used as a guide for setting street standards for the area.



Army Street Opportunity

The location and site features, such as steep topography make this site a candidate for a public/private partnership. Shared public parking could be accommodated below grade of Holly street with mixed uses above. A pedestrian way, as shown in the rendering below, would allow for a pedestrian connection or at a minimum a view connection to the waterfront. This right-of-way could be vacated in order to develop parking as long as the view corridor to the waterfront area remains.



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.

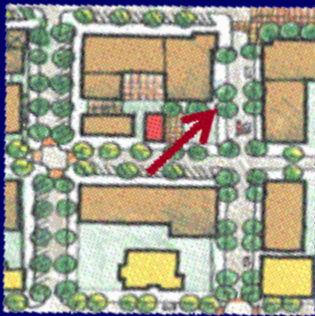
CHAPTER FIVE

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.

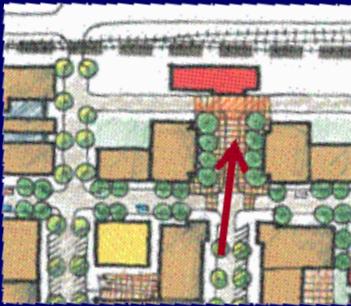


CHAPTER FIVE

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.



6. CAPITAL FACILITIES

Old Town has a number of key capital facilities already in place including Maritime Heritage Park, trails, water, sewer, storm and streets. It is anticipated that little in the way of very large capital improvements are needed.

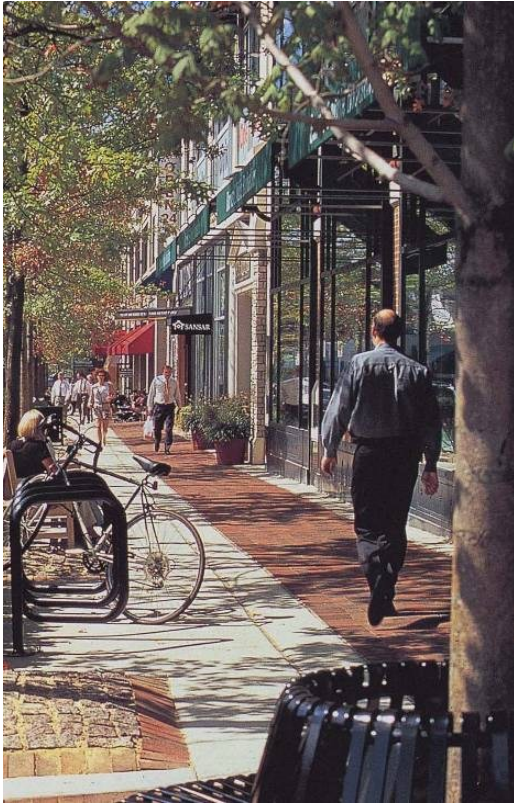
While the water, sewer and storm systems are in place and service is more than adequate to serve the projected growth, the streets, particularly the non-arterial local streets are in need of upgrades. The streets lack sidewalks in much of the area and will need to incorporate design elements as outlined in Chapter 4.

6.1. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

6.1.1 Initial Phase

The City should participate in funding infrastructure improvements that will kick start early redevelopment opportunities. These investments should be made where publicly owned assets will also benefit. Candidates include improvements to C Street, Astor Street and Maritime Heritage Park. A portion of this Sub-area falls within the Local Infrastructure Financing Tool boundary, which could be one potential source of funding.

The City should work with utility companies and property owners to determine costs, feasibility, and potential sources of undergrounding utilities.



Capital Improvement Costs and Revenues

The costs and sources of revenues below are estimates only and reflect costs and fees in 2007 dollars.

Non-Arterial (Local Streets)

Estimated Cost	\$5,000,000
Sources of Revenue	
City (LIFT, REET, Other)	\$2,000,000
Private	<u>\$3,000,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$5,000,000

Arterial Upgrades (F and Holly Streets)

Estimated Cost	\$4,500,000
Sources of Revenue	
City (TIF, REET, Other)	\$2,600,000
Traffic Impact Fees	<u>\$1,900,000*</u>
Total Revenue	\$4,500,000

Parks, New Plazas & Trails

Total Cost	\$2,500,000
Source of Revenue	
City (PIF, REET, Grants, Other)	<u>\$2,500,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$2,500,000

* Traffic Impact Fees generated from potential build-out in Old Town through 2022.

Note: The cost of under grounding power lines and utilities is not included.

6.1.2 Future Phases

Costs of sidewalks, undergrounding utilities such as power lines and improving non-arterial street should be undertaken primarily by the developer on a case by case basis or through a Local Improvement District (LID). The estimated costs of these improvements, minus undergrounding utilities, were incorporated into the economic analysis of the proposed Floor Area Ratio.

Costs of roadway and intersection improvements to major arterials such as Holly and F streets should be shared by other development through Transportation Impact Fees and other City sources as these streets are impacted by growth in the downtown, waterfront and growth in general.

Park impact fees from development in this area are one potential source of funding for Maritime Heritage Park amenities, acquisition and development of new plazas and trail improvements in the area. These fees, along with other REET, grants and other City sources should be considered as an option for securing the land as well as construction needed for creation of the public plaza areas adjacent to the Territorial Historical Courthouse and the Great Northern Passenger Depot.