

4.0 Development Character

The Waterfront District redevelopment is intended to implement the community vision for the Central Waterfront by converting a large under-utilized Brownfields industrial site into a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood where people can live, work, shop, study and spend their leisure time, without relying on vehicular transportation. The project will reflect the commitment of Bellingham citizens to environmental stewardship by remediating historic contamination and restoring degraded shorelines to provide habitat for fish, birds and small wildlife species, as well as, opportunities for public access to the water. A network of interconnected waterfront parks, trails and public open space will provide outdoor recreation opportunities and community gathering places to serve the entire Whatcom County community and attract new residents, businesses and visitors to the region.

The mix of uses and phasing of development and infrastructure within the Waterfront District is intended to complement and enhance businesses in the City Center and adjacent neighborhoods. Development should include a healthy balance between the creation of new jobs and housing opportunities, supported by goods and services. Public ownership of the majority of the land, during the planning phase, will allow some of the land to be leased or sold for development over time.

Interim uses are proposed to make use of vacant properties until the development market and infrastructure investment can support more intensive uses. These interim uses include but are not limited to: marine-related light industrial and transportation, construction staging, environmental remediation, alternative energy research and production, food production and surface parking.

The policies and implementation strategies in this chapter, and the associated development regulations, are intended to guide the redevelopment of the site as a compact urban village with sufficient density to support transit and pedestrian-oriented development. Development standards relating to building height, setbacks, and design are proposed to preserve key view corridors to and from adjacent neighborhoods, limit building mass adjacent to parks and rights-of-way, and encourage sustainable design features and amenities to support pedestrian-oriented commercial activity and public gathering space at ground level.

The Waterfront District Downtown Area achieved a Stage 1 Certification under the US Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Neighborhood Development pilot program. This program integrates the principles of smart growth, new urbanism and green building and benefits communities by reducing urban sprawl, increasing transportation choices, decreasing automobile dependence, encouraging healthy living, and protecting threatened species. These development strategies are reflected in policies and implementation strategies throughout this Sub-Area Plan.

The Waterfront District, Old Town and a portion of the City Center were also selected by the Portland Sustainability Institute to participate in the EcoDistrict Program. There is considerable overlap between LEED ND program concepts and EcoDistrict concepts. Where feasible, these concepts were integrated into the Sub-area Plan and Development Regulations.

Waterfront District Guiding Principles and Implementation Strategies

The Waterfront Advisory Group sponsored a public involvement process during 2005 and 2006, which led to City and Port adoption of the Guiding Principles and Implementation Strategies” in 2006. The following New Whatcom (Waterfront District) Implementation Strategies provide guidance related to Development Character:

- Redevelop the New Whatcom site with a mix of uses including jobs, housing, retail development, services, educational and cultural facilities and water-dependent industrial uses.
- Divide the New Whatcom redevelopment area into a number of districts with distinct character and function, developed in phases to correspond with market demand.
- Encourage a mix of uses which complement, rather than duplicate, businesses in the Central Business District and provide family-wage jobs, including offices, research and development, business incubators, live-work studios, and water-related industries.
- Maintain a balance between jobs, housing, retail development and services developed on the New Whatcom site. Develop a phasing plan which establishes a ratio between retail, services, offices or institutional uses, and residential development on the site.
- Encourage the development of businesses which provide goods and services to residents of the site and surrounding neighborhoods, local businesses and employees, and visitors to attractions on the site. Develop size and design criteria which discourage “big box” stores which draw the majority of their customers from other areas of the City.
- Work with non-profit organizations and private developers to provide incentives for development of a mix of housing types affordable to the employees of the businesses provided on the site.
- Include sites for water-related industry and services to support commercial fishing, recreational boating and maritime industries, including boat building and repair to preserve the nautical history of our community.
- Develop appropriate design features and transitional areas to buffer uses which produce noise, glare or odors from incompatible uses where needed.
- Capitalize on the synergistic relationship between New Whatcom and adjacent commercial districts by enhancing rather than competing with adjacent areas especially the Central Business District. This can be achieved by an early emphasis on jobs, residential units and other activities which support businesses in the adjacent areas.
- Work with universities, agencies, organizations and business groups involved in education, art and culture to attract educational and cultural facilities to the waterfront.
- Work with non-profit organizations and provide a combination of incentives, mandates, and subsidies for private developers to develop a mix of housing types affordable to employees of the jobs provided nearby.
- Implement land uses that acknowledge Bellingham’s deep maritime and cultural history.
- Design a building scale and business atmosphere which encourages unique, locally owned businesses.
- Utilize appropriate site design standards, such as Whatcom County Building Industry of Washington “Green Community” program or Leadership in Environmental Education and Design (LEED)™ Neighborhood Development standards and encourage new or remodeled buildings to be BuiltGreen™ or LEED™ certified.
- Establish unique urban waterfront design guidelines to encourage contemporary architecture and leading green building techniques that blend with the historic industrial buildings on the GP site and highlight the maritime flavor and cultural heritage of the Bellingham waterfront.
- Work with Lummi and Nooksack leaders to facilitate their development of cultural and educational facilities which feature Native American culture and history.

4.1 Development Character Policies

Policies Land Use Policies:

1. Encourage a compatible mix of urban density commercial, residential, recreational, institutional, and light industrial uses.
2. Maintain a balance between job creation, housing, and building space for goods and services within the Waterfront District. Allow the market to influence uses within individual development projects.
3. Cluster compatible land uses and adopt appropriate development regulations to establish areas of unique character within different sub-zones of the Waterfront District.
4. Develop a network of waterfront access points, parks, public gathering places and areas for public use and enjoyment throughout the Waterfront District. Integrate parks and open space into development areas to add value to adjacent properties.
5. Encourage pedestrian-oriented development at street level and require the ground floor of buildings fronting on Granary Avenue and Laurel Street to be designed for commercial, retail, services or public facility use. Allow these spaces to be occupied by offices or other interim uses until such time as the market supports conversion to commercial use.
6. Preserve sufficient land for marine cargo and marine-related commercial, recreational and industrial uses in areas with access to navigable waters, and adopt appropriate development standards for these areas which recognize the potential for noise, glare and the need for water access, open yard space and buildings big enough to store and repair large vessels and equipment.
7. Identify a site with sufficient size and expansion space for a campus of higher education or other institutional or business campus and adopt flexible design standards to allow a unique character to be established for this campus area.
8. Allow for opportunities to accommodate a grocery store, elementary school, day care center, recreation facilities and similar services for families with children and encourage construction of such facilities when there is sufficient demand.
9. Establish transitional areas to be used for light industrial use, construction staging, environmental clean-up uses, including temporary storage or treatment of dredge materials, alternative energy research or production, local food production, surface parking and similar interim uses until such time as the market and infrastructure is available for these areas to be developed into more intensive uses.
10. Enable the development of inclusive affordable housing for low and moderate income persons. A variety of housing types and price ranges should be available, including housing for elderly and disabled persons, families with children, students and employees of local businesses.
11. Encourage the development of public services, art and cultural facilities which reflect the history of the site and region to serve area residents and attract visitors to the District.
12. Provide for sufficient density to allow public entities to recover investments into land, clean-up costs, parks and infrastructure, through land sales and future tax revenues.
13. Phase development to meet market demand and installation of infrastructure.



14. Encourage land uses in the Waterfront District that complement and help to diversify and expand the City Center and take advantage of the unique urban waterfront location.
15. Encourage industrial land uses that provide jobs for light manufacturing and assembly, high technology, research and development and industrial uses which depend upon or relate to the waterfront.

Sustainable Development Policies:

16. Promote sustainable design strategies and development practices generally consistent with LEED for Neighborhood Design and other sustainable development programs.
17. Ensure that environmental remediation of soil, groundwater and marine shoreline areas occurs prior to or in conjunction with redevelopment.
18. Restore marine shorelines by removing creosote pilings and dilapidated industrial structures and replace with shoreline materials and contours which support ecosystem recovery goals and public access, where appropriate.
19. Encourage re-use and recycling of materials on-site.
20. Re-use the existing Aerated Stabilization Basin breakwater materials for environmental capping, shoreline restoration and fill for parks and roadways to lower the carbon footprint of the project and reduce impacts on local sand and gravel quarries.
21. Encourage building and site designs which conserve energy and potable water, capture and treat storm water on-site, and utilize alternative energy, recycled wastewater, sustainable building materials and innovative construction techniques.
22. Create a framework for personal wellness and environmental stewardship by providing habitat restoration, outdoor recreation opportunities, convenient recycling and compost facilities, roof top and patio gardens, sites for local food production and facilities to support pedestrians, and alternative modes of transportation such as bicycles, motorcycles, transit and ride-share programs.

**LEED ND
Credit Opportunities**

Note: LEED ND, developed by the US Green Building Council, is one of many different voluntary rating systems to address and achieve sustainability goals. The following plan features provide potential credit toward LEED ND certification:

The project includes a balance of housing units and jobs. At least 25% of the total building square footage is designed for residential use, and the project is located within a ½ mile walking distance of 4,900 existing jobs.

Half of the housing units are within walking distance of the proposed Western Washington University campus site.

Site design policies and development standards encourage walkable streets, with buildings located close to the sidewalk, commercial uses at ground level, doors and windows facing the sidewalk, and pedestrian amenities such as weather protection, benches, lighting and art work at street level.



23. Incorporate bio-swales and other low-impact stormwater management techniques into landscape medians, street plantings and stormwater systems where possible to provide an aesthetic amenity and reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff.
24. Utilize natural vegetation and low-water use plants in landscape design to avoid the need to use potable water for irrigation.
25. Design circulation systems and parking facilities which encourage non-motorized transportation, transit and ride-share programs, reduce paved driving surfaces, and protect water quality.
26. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings if an assessment of structural, economic, market and land use factors show positive benefits of keeping the building. New buildings should be built utilizing methods that will allow easy adaptive reuse in the future if the building use changes over time.
27. Development should utilize district specific utilities, such as district heating and cooling, and non-potable water systems if available and implemented through a Waterfront Utilities Master Plan.

Site Design Policies:

28. Within mixed-use commercial and residential areas, define pedestrian-scale blocks and building pads by developing a network of interior roads, bicycle routes and pedestrian connections with a block size similar to or smaller than the existing City of Bellingham Central Business District and Fairhaven. Where buildings or blocks exceed 240 feet, require pedestrian through-block routes and pedestrian access through buildings during business hours.
29. Encourage pedestrian-oriented development in mixed-use commercial areas by locating buildings adjacent to the sidewalk on arterial streets, except when set back to accommodate public plazas, outdoor seating, dining, landscaping or artwork.
30. Minimize the visual impact of surface parking by reducing parking space requirements, locating surface parking along interior streets or alleys, behind or within the interior of buildings, or below street grade where feasible, and requiring landscaping or screening of surface parking lots. (See related parking policies in Chapter 5 entitled Multi-modal Circulation & Parking.)
31. Establish view corridors and design standards to preserve water views from public streets and designated view points within adjacent neighborhoods and establish visual connection with the Central Business District.
32. Encourage public and private open space at ground level through design regulations and incentives for dedication of public open space.

Building Design Policies:

33. Establish design regulations and a predictable design review process to ensure that building designs are consistent with the intended character of the various development areas.
34. Encourage pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor of buildings fronting arterial streets within Commercial Mixed- Use areas, and provide street-level amenities,

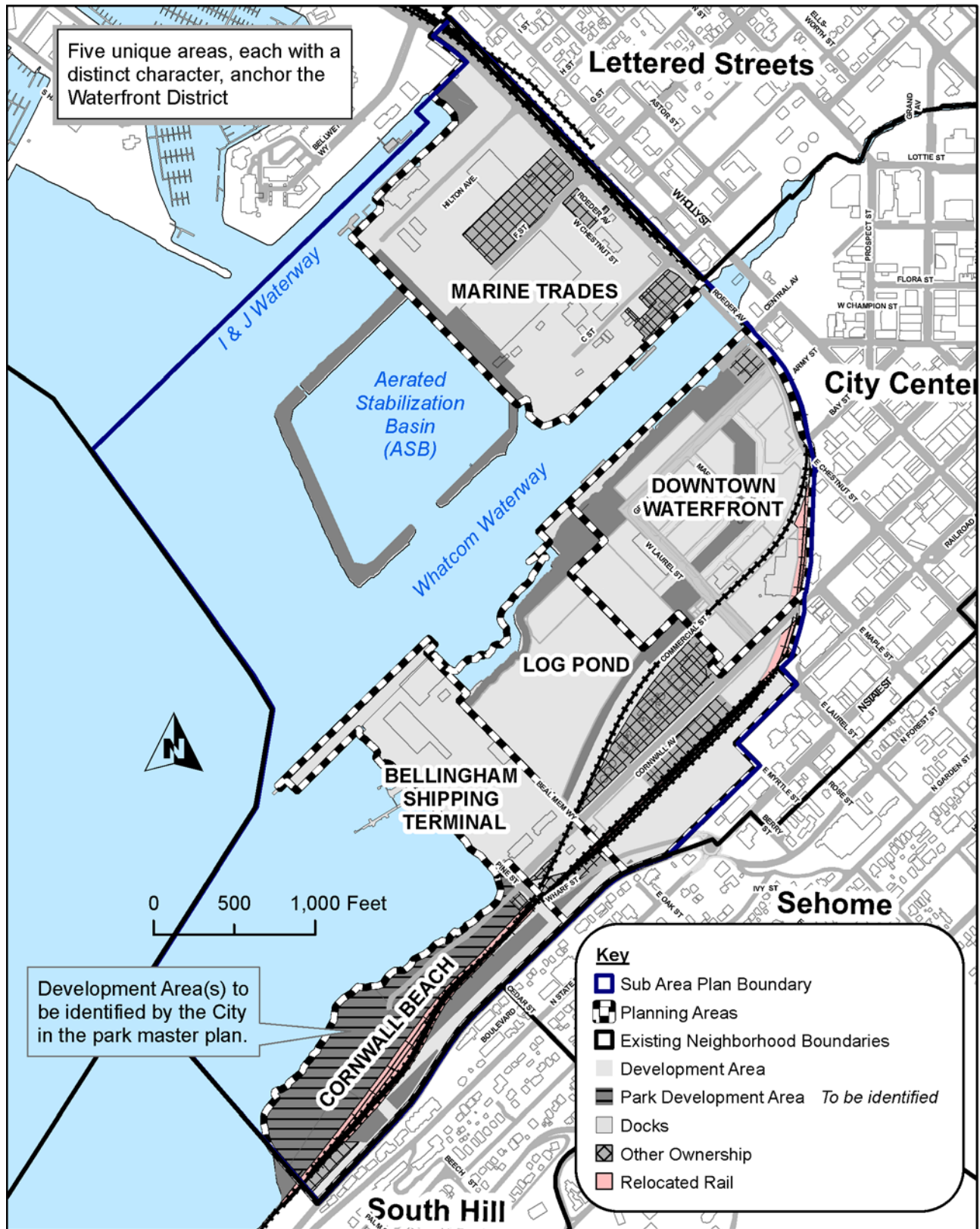


- such as awnings, benches, lighting and landscaping to support pedestrian and transit use.
35. Establish building heights, density, and design standards relating to building bulk and scale to encourage building forms which are inviting to pedestrians at street level, preserve views to and from adjacent neighborhoods, and have sufficient density to support use of public transit and attract private investment.
 36. Recognize the need for larger industrial buildings and less stringent design standards to accommodate marine industrial uses, upland boat storage and other light industrial uses within Industrial Mixed-use areas. Provide lighting standards, setbacks, screening or landscaping to reduce impacts and separate Industrial Mixed-use areas from other mixed-use development areas.
 37. Encourage appropriately scaled signs and kiosks integrated with building design and street furniture to identify businesses and direct the public to parks, trails, transit facilities, parking and other locations of interest.
 38. Design building roof tops and mechanical equipment with consideration for appearance from the adjacent bluff. Encourage screening, vegetation and use of materials to minimize glare.



When residential development is located at street level, the ground floor should be elevated above street level or set back from the sidewalk with landscaping along the street frontage.

Figure 4-1: Waterfront District Development Areas



Areas of Unique Character

The Waterfront District is divided into five areas of unique character where the mix of land uses, density, building types and the layout and design of streets, trails, parks and open spaces will define the character and function of the proposed development:



Marine Trades Area

This 58-acre area is characterized by a working waterfront that will support a new Clean Ocean Marina or other water-dependent use which adaptively reuses the ASB wastewater treatment lagoon. The main focus of development in this area is to accommodate jobs revolving around marine trades such as fishing, boat building, boat repair, marine haul out facilities, marine product manufacturing and supplies, research and development.

Shipping Terminal Area

The existing deep water port in this 25-acre area will be maintained for shipping, port and industrial related opportunities. Industrial uses characterize this area with the potential for use of its peripheral areas to accommodate transitions between related office, transportation, and light industrial uses.

The Downtown Waterfront Area



The character of this 44-acre area is similar to the commercial portion of the City Center or Fairhaven. Uses that provide goods and services will mainly serve the population of the area and are not intended to compete with those in the City Center. A mix of housing, office and institutional uses are proposed to be accommodated in a high-density configuration centered around a central park. A site for a higher-education or other institutional or business campus is identified along the southern edge. Medium density development will be encouraged to

establish an urban environment that will become the heart of the Waterfront District. This area's waterfront development will have an urban character with pedestrian-oriented uses encouraged along the waterfront promenade.

Log Pond Area



This 52-acre area is identified as an Industrial Mixed-use area to be utilized for transportation, construction or light industrial uses through the end of the planning period for the Waterfront District Sub-Area Plan. Preferred land uses in the area also include light manufacturing and assembly, high technology, and research and development. Materials which are manufactured, processed or stored in this area may be imported or exported by truck or by vessel through the Bellingham Shipping Terminal or over the remaining portion of the GP Wharf. The shoreline and beach along the Log Pond will be restored for habitat and public enjoyment, accessible via a waterfront pedestrian and bicycle trail and by non-

motorized vessels. An additional public trail corridor is located along the easterly edge of the Log Pond area to provide a more direct pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Downtown Waterfront Area and Cornwall Beach. Public access through this area may need to be interrupted during periods when recreational use would conflict with industrial or cargo activities.

Cornwall Beach Area



A mix of residential and office uses, with a small amount of goods and service uses are proposed in this 29-acre area. The goods and service uses will mainly serve residents of the Waterfront District and the users of the Cornwall Beach Park, which is a major component of this area, with connections to Boulevard Park via an over-water walkway. Medium density development will be encouraged to relate to the park environment. The Cornwall Beach area includes the bluff located east of the railroad tracks along Boulevard and State Street. The

majority of this bluff is in public ownership and is not developable due to steep slopes and limited access. The Environmental Impact Statement for the Waterfront District did not contemplate any development along this bluff. If the private property along the bluff develops in the future, additional planning and SEPA review will be required.

Figure 4-2: Waterfront District Urban Village View Corridors



Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

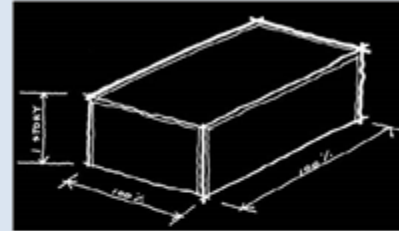
During initial planning discussions, the Port and City planning team identified the Fairhaven historic district as a starting point for evaluating density options. The density of building in Fairhaven, if applied to the Downtown Waterfront portion of the Waterfront District would result in approximately 2.8 million square feet of building floor space in the Downtown Waterfront area.

Lower density development is proposed in the Marine Trades, Bellingham Shipping Terminal and Log Pond areas and urban density development is concentrated in the Downtown Waterfront area and a potential development pad within the Cornwall Beach area.

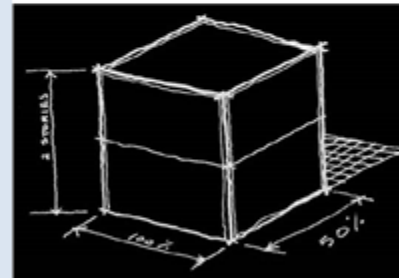
Base and Maximum FAR for the various Waterfront District planning areas are included in the Waterfront District Development Regulations.

What is Floor Area Ratio(FAR)?

FAR is the gross square footage of a building, excluding structured parking, divided by the square footage of the site.



Two different forms of a 1.0 FAR building



For example: In both examples above, the building is 10,000 square feet, and is built on a 10,00 square foot lot. This is an FAR of 1.0.

If you know the FAR and you want to calculate how much gross floor area you could build, multiply the FAR by the site area.

Historic and Cultural Resource Policies:

39. Utilize the assumptions, methodology and recommendations from the Waterfront District Adaptive Re-Use Assessment dated 2009, prepared by Johnson Architecture to evaluate any proposals to demolish any of the structures identified on Figure 4-3. An updated assessment of market conditions and/or developer interest in adaptive reuse should be completed for the Board Mill Building or the Alcohol Plant if either of these buildings are demolished.
40. Temporarily hold certain structures for further market consideration and demolish certain unsafe structures and structures with limited potential for reuse, and salvage or reuse of materials and equipment within buildings and open spaces.
41. Document and preserve the rich industrial and Native American histories of the site through photographs and interpretive displays, signage, display of old industrial equipment and tanks, and reuse materials salvaged from demolished structures.
42. Ensure the preservation of culturally significant features through adherence to defined protocols and procedures for site cleanup and redevelopment.
43. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings if an assessment of structural, economic, market and land use factors show positive benefits of keeping the building. New buildings should be built utilizing methods that will allow easy adaptive reuse in the future if the building use changes over time.

Old Granary Building



Built: 1928
Dimensions: 121'x110' with
81'x39' office
Footprint Area: 16,469 sf.

Resource: Structure under construction for adaptive reuse.

Digester Building Tanks



Built: Ca 1938
Dimensions: 235'x44'
Footprint Area: 10,340 sf.

Resource: Possible display of tanks as a park feature.

Ceramic Tile Tanks



Built: 1930
Dimensions: 31' x 120
Footprint Area: 1,607 sf.

Resource: Possible adaptive reuse as park feature, augmented with relocation of other historic equipment and materials.

Board Mill Building



Built: Ca 1946
Dimensions: 303'x72'
Footprint Area: 21,816 sf.

Resource: Possible adaptive reuse of structure, or relocate and reuse materials.

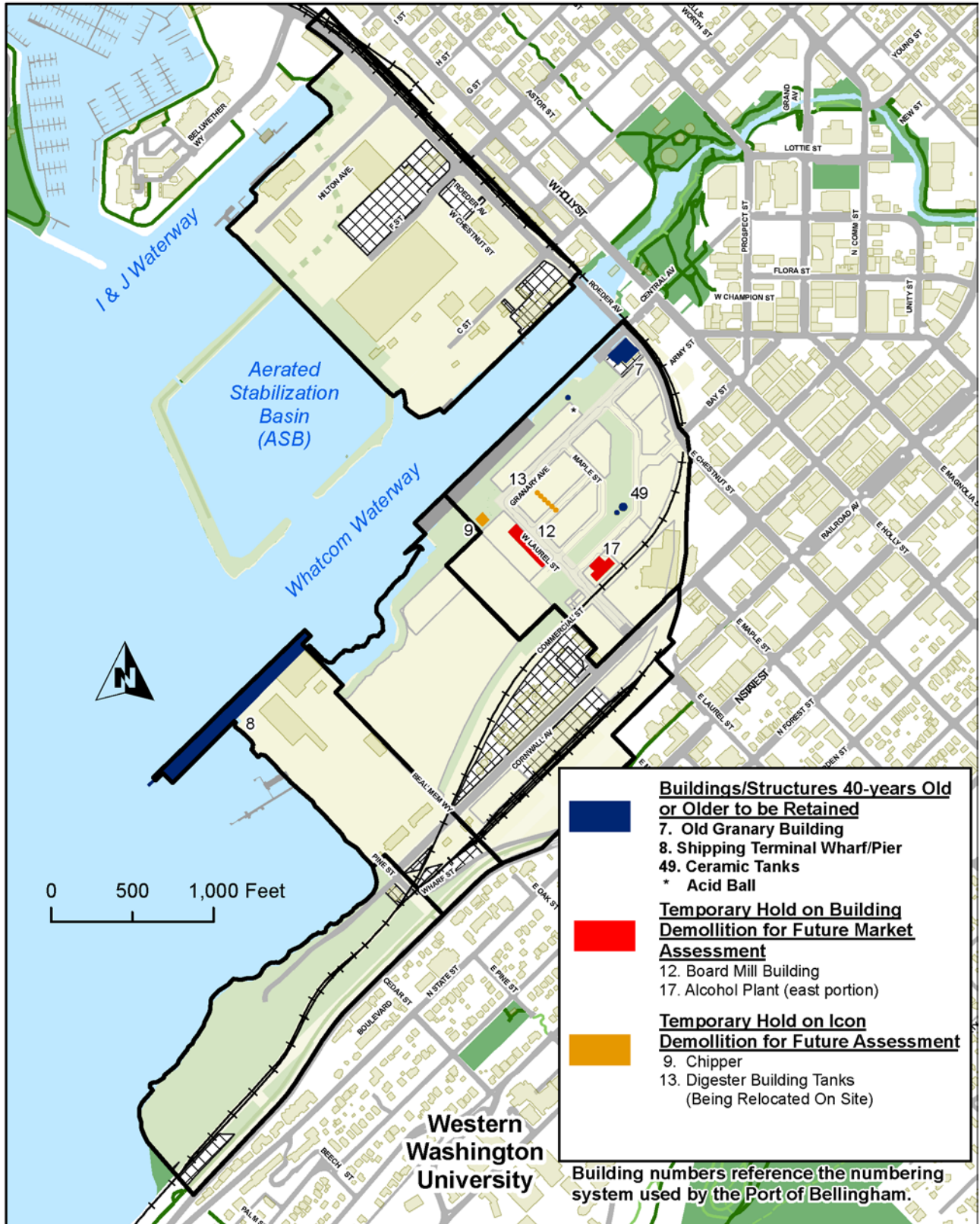
Alcohol Plant



Built: Ca 1937-1946
Dimensions: 141.5' x 50'
Footprint Area: 15,575 sf.

Resource: Possible adaptive reuse of structure, or relocate and reuse materials.

Figure 4-3: Structures Which May Be Retained/Re-Used



4.2 Implementation Strategies

1. Establish areas of unique character and several different Waterfront Mixed-Use zones to encourage clustering of compatible uses and variation in density and development standards by area.
2. Adopt development regulations, design standards and a predictable and efficient development approval process to implement the community vision established in the Waterfront District Sub-Area Plan.
3. Establish building height regulations and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) system to encourage urban density development with sufficient critical mass to support transit and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development.
4. Provide density bonuses to encourage provision of public open space, affordable housing, LEED Silver (or equivalent) buildings, or acquisition of density credits from the Lake Whatcom watershed.
5. Establish view corridors and design regulations to preserve public views along waterways and to and from street ends, public places and viewpoints within adjacent neighborhoods.
6. Establish a phasing plan to phase building square footage by area to coincide with market demand and the availability of infrastructure, with flexibility to respond to changes in the economy or market and the availability of grant funding or private investment.
7. Establish the character of the early phase development by providing parks, trails, bicycle & transit facilities and pedestrian amenities in conjunction with early development.
8. Implement the Waterfront District Adaptive Re-Use recommendations by actively marketing buildings with adaptive reuse potential, retaining certain industrial icons within public spaces, completing mitigation for removal of structures and demolishing unsafe and/or unusable structures.



The Boardmill Building is one of the remaining historic buildings which may be considered for adaptive reuse.

9. Work with the Bellingham/Whatcom Housing Authority, Kulshan Community Land Trust and other public and private housing developers to construct affordable housing units within residential or mixed-use development projects. When evaluating alternative development proposals, give priority to proposals which include programs to maintain at least 10% the housing units at levels affordable for purchase or rent by households which earn up to 80% of the City of Bellingham area median income.

10. When subdividing the property include a range of parcel sizes so as not to exclude any potential developers the opportunity to lease or purchase land in the Waterfront District.
11. Evaluate alternative development scenarios utilizing evaluation criteria to balance environmental impacts, economic impacts and community benefit.
12. Provide additional flexibility in the application of development standards in the Land Use Code to facilitate the development of buildings attempting to meet the Living Building Challenge (LBC) or equivalent. Such flexibility could be in the form of incentives such as added height and floor area ratio, or less stringent adherence to certain development and design standards. The LBC is a green building certification program created by the International Living Future Institute to recognize buildings meeting the most advanced sustainable standard. Information on the challenge is available at www.ilbc.org/lbc.
13. A more detailed development plan should be prepared for the three large blocks east of Granary Ave before any of these blocks are developed. This plan should consider the proposed ground floor uses and how they relate to the adjacent streets, parks and public spaces, and define pedestrian routes through these large blocks. Retail or service uses are encouraged at ground level along the Granary Ave frontage, but residential or offices may be appropriate at ground level along the local roads behind and beside these blocks. If below-grade parking is proposed, the elevation of ground floor uses, street level experience, the location of parking garage entrances and services, and the management of excavated soil should be considered. Buildings should be located to preserve some views of the Bay and San Juan Islands from the public plaza at Bay Street.



14. The Port should complete an adaptive reuse assessment of the Alcohol Plant prior to design of the adjacent local roads and park. This plan should consider whether it is cost effective to develop the entire building or a portion of the building, whether the building should be expanded, the need for and location of parking, pedestrian and vehicle access to the building, and how the ground floor uses will relate to the adjacent park. If an appropriate use is identified for the west half of this building, the park and road design along this face may be modified to accommodate reuse of this building.
15. The Phase 3 and 4 development parcels along the bluff may be used for construction staging and interim parking through Phase 1 and 2. The Port, City and developer should jointly develop a design and funding strategy for the parking garage, Bay Street steps and Bay Street intersection improvements. This plan should consider pedestrian and vehicle circulation, including ADA access, to and through the garage, the appearance and use of the building space along the exterior face of the parking garage, the elevation and use of the ground floor building space, and how the proposed uses will relate to the adjacent local roads and park.
16. The Port and Western Washington University, or an alternate developer, should jointly develop a University Development Plan for the Institutional Mixed-Use area, which considers proposed uses, programs and cultural facilities to attract visitors and create jobs or job training. This plan should describe the proposed building density and placement, parking demand and location, vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation, view protection strategies and the interface with adjacent parks, trails and industrial uses.



Figure 4-4: Waterfront District Urban Village Land Use

