



**CITY OF BELLINGHAM
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

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**Recommendations on the Fairhaven Urban Village Design Standards and
Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) 20.37.300, 20.25, and 21.10**

On April 3, 2012 the City of Bellingham's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was asked to review and provide recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the 3/20/12 draft of the Fairhaven Urban Village Design Standards, BMC 20.37.300, 20.25, and 21.10 (Development Regulations, Design Review Applicability, Decision Criteria, and Process).

After review and deliberation, the HPC unanimously voted in support of the 3/20/12 draft documents, in that they will:

- Promote the continued preservation of historically significant buildings in the Fairhaven Historic District;
- Promote the design of compatible new development that is creative, high-quality, and evocative of its own time;
- Create an attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment in all Fairhaven Design Review Areas;
- Provide a streamlined and predictable review process;
- Protect the investment of property owners by encouraging new construction that respects and relates to the scale of existing buildings; and
- Increase awareness of what constitutes good design.

However, the HPC respectfully submits the following recommendations regarding maximum height limits and relative upper story step backs, floor-to-floor minimums, and signage:

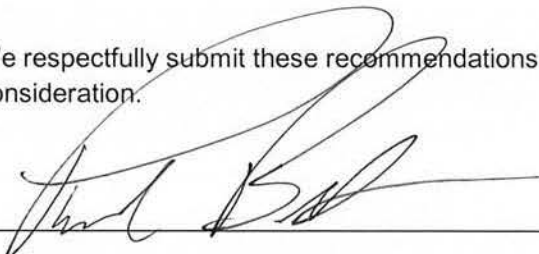
- A.** The HPC supports the proposed **maximum allowable heights** and **upper story step-backs** for each of the Design Review Areas as defined in BMC 20.37.300 Development Regulations, with the following recommendation that in the Historic Influence, Industrial Influence and Maritime Influence DRAs, the following changes be made:
1. Amend Draft BMC 20.37.030 **Figure. 330-B, Option 3** so that a 6-story development is required only one step back at the 4th floor, instead of two step backs at the 4th and 6th floors.
 2. Amend **Exhibit X-Draft Fairhaven Urban Village Design Standards, Chapter 3: New Construction**, to allow differentiation of design, through a change in architectural detail and material (i.e. brick and concrete for the lower floors and predominately glass on the stepped-back upper levels) in the upper story stepped-back portions of a building. The intent of this language is that use of varied styles and materials would 1) encourage the first few stories built at the street edge visually reinforce the perception of a 2-4 story scale from the pedestrian perspective, and 2) allow taller buildings to appear contemporary, yet compatible with adjacent historic buildings.
- B.** The HPC supports the proposed **floor-to-floor height minimums** as defined in the Fairhaven Urban Village Design Standards. Requiring floor-to-floor height minimums for new construction in, abutting, and across the right-of-way from the Historic District DRA will help insure that new design, especially at the street level, is compatible with contributing historic buildings.

RB 4/10/12

C. **Signs.** The HPC supports the proposed **sign regulations** as outlined in BMC 20.37.300 Development Regulations, with the following recommendations shown in legislative format with omissions struck-out and additions underlined):

1. Amend Draft BMC 20.25.020 B.1.e. concerning Design Review Applicability to require signs be subject to design review except as follows:
 - e. Signs which the Director determines do not affect the architectural character of the building and will have minimal detrimental impact on adjacent uses.
2. Amend Draft BMC 20.37.370 concerning regulation for Fairhaven Urban Village -Signs to remove subsection D.4. as follows:
 4. ~~Building-mounted signs shall:~~
 - a. ~~Be located to emphasize design elements of the building facade itself.~~
 - b. ~~Be mounted to fit within existing architectural features.~~
 - c. ~~Use the shape of the sign to reinforce the lines of the building.~~
 - d. ~~Not obscure a building's character-defining features.~~
 - e. ~~Use permanent, durable materials such as painted or carved wood, individual wood or cast metal letters or symbols, or stone (slate, marble or sandstone). Plastic and other synthetic materials are not appropriate.~~
 - f. ~~Be limited to lighting that is subdued, incandescent and front lit from the exterior rather than back lit. Neon signs are permitted.~~
3. Amend **Exhibit X**-Draft Fairhaven Design Standards, Chapter 4, All Projects, to incorporate that subsection to be removed from Draft 20.37.370 D.4.

We respectfully submit these recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council for their consideration.



Rod Burton, Historic Preservation Chair

4/10/12

Date