

Josselyn Winslow
1134 Finnegan Way #306
Bellingham, WA 98225

7 February 2012

Jeffrey Thomas
Nichole Oliver
City of Bellingham Planning Department

Dear Mr. Thomas and Ms. Oliver

As a resident of Fairhaven Gardens (on the corners of Finnegan Way, Mill and 11th Streets) I attended the Fairhaven Planning Meetings and have seen the proposed design elements. My hope is that you will adopt design elements that will encourage Fairhaven to grow but still maintain its urban village appeal and friendly, livable environment. With this in mind I make these comments:

1. Plan for urban density. The Growth Management Act makes it clear that we need to protect our farmland and to increase urban density. But, allowing buildings with combined height and mass that are “too big” takes away from urban village ambiance. The buildings on the southeast corner of 10th and Harris Street are “too big”. Their size, shape and overall design dominate the area. Their massiveness has changed the feeling of the neighborhood. They overwhelm the individual buildings across the street. I appreciate the need for density – but want the proposed design elements to protect the integrity Fairhaven and retain the urban village feeling. Even having increased heights with stepped back levels will not solve the problem if a building is just “too big” for its proposed location. Design standards have to be specific enough to prevent new construction that is “too big” for Fairhaven.

2. Protect Views by keeping the 35-45 feet height limits. View is a major element of property values, and especially in Fairhaven. In early years people may not have been so concerned about view corridors and the ability to look out to the bay, but today it is an important buying/selling point for people living in Fairhaven. View makes a major difference in residential property values. As potential residential condo buyers, when we looked at the property that was to become Fairhaven Gardens, we were assured that any building in the lot across the street at the northwest corner of Mill and 11th Street (the Ken Imus property) would be built to established specifications. The planning department needs guidelines to insure that a building similar to those in Fairhaven that have been built or remodeled by Mr. Imus – that is, one that is not too high or too massive – could be constructed in the lot on the northwest corner of Mill and 11th Street. Such a building would fit into the neighborhood.

3. Make sidewalks Pedestrian-Friendly. As Fairhaven grows it needs to remain a pedestrian-friendly area. When eating and/or drinking establishments fence-off areas of the public sidewalks for tables and chairs it adds to the urban ambience, but some restaurants have encroached on the public walking space. Fenced-off areas should not be permitted to occupy more than a designated

percentage (less than 50%) of the public sidewalks. At least two people should be able to walk comfortably side-by-side.

4. Enhance access to and from the Fairhaven Waterfront. Both the Industrial Influence Area and the Maritime Area present major opportunities to increase the density in and livability of Fairhaven. In addition to being required to create a pedestrian-friendly street edge, new construction, even if it is for industrial use, should not completely block waterfront access.

5. Extend the Urban Village ambiance down the Harris Street View Corridor. Development in the area along the west side of Harris Street could recreate the feeling of Old Fairhaven. New construction from the urban core down Harris Street towards the water can provide commercial opportunities and still maintain the urban village atmosphere with some taller structures and, particularly, in area below 8th Street, some lower, smaller structures, two or three stories high and built with materials that reflect Fairhaven's history. Emphasize the village atmosphere with residential units above ground level businesses. Add narrower streets or walkways to connect the blocks. This lower commercial/industrial area could turn into an inland "Granville Island", accessible from central Fairhaven or the waterfront.

6. Promote commercial viability and protect the livability of Fairhaven. Assure that city planners have the tools to promote development that will allow businesses to prosper while protecting the people who live in Fairhaven. Safeguard views. Plan a pleasing transition from the historic core outward, and especially to the west and the waterfront. Continue to build/rebuild Old Fairhaven with the historical details Ken Imus has fostered over the years.

7. Complete the planning process. Because of the many hours that staff and community members have put into the planning process I would urge that the process be completed in a timely fashion.

Thanks to the City of Bellingham Planning Department members for all of their efforts to make this process a success.

Sincerely

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cc: Mayor Kelli Linville
Planning Commission Members
City Council Members
Old Fairhaven Association-Jody Finnegan
Fairhaven Neighbors-Vince Biciunas