

## Economic Development

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

Within a decade of its founding in 1883, the Town of Fairhaven incorporated as a city of more than 5,000 residents covering 7.2 square miles. In 1904 it merged with New Whatcom to form the City of Bellingham. Today the Fairhaven Neighborhood has a population of approximately 1,017 (1,175 when permitted projects are completed and fully occupied) in an area of only .3925 square miles (about 192 acres). This population is spread between 138 single-family units and 325 multi-family units. **enabling Fairhaven to meet its to meet its** The total of 463 units represents XXX% of Fairhaven's 2020 population growth goals

In earlier years, Fairhaven was home to major industrial enterprises in salmon canning, lumber milling, log exporting, and ship and boat building. While Fairhaven is today one of Bellingham's smaller neighborhoods, it is the most diverse economically, having a reduced, marine-related and light manufacturing industrial base, largely located on property managed by the Port of Bellingham, and a recently expanded, multi-family housing and visitor-oriented retail overlay located in its core. During its history, Fairhaven has been the scene of several "boom and bust" economic cycles, all market-driven. The current challenge is to formulate and implement plans for balanced economic development that will maximize value for all of Fairhaven's citizens in terms of per capita income, property values, business profits, and tax revenues. Fairhaven has groups of concerned stakeholders (residents, workers and owners of homes, businesses, and commercial properties) that are **facing** accepting the challenge of working together to **better** ensure its success.

### ECONOMIC ASSETS:

- Fairhaven is endowed with a unique sense of place derived from a natural location offering views of and access to wooded areas and the shoreline of Harris Bay and a built environment with a turn-of-the-20th century character, having a warm texture and an intimate scale.
- Fairhaven also enjoys a special sense of community with cordial shopping and dining experiences and singular events in public spaces, **including one-of-a-kind shops and services that cater to the residents of adjacent neighborhoods, the wider City of Bellingham-Whatcom County community and visitors from more distant areas.** These elements combine to give Fairhaven a "feels good" atmosphere and to make it a very desirable place to live, work, visit and conduct business.
- Fairhaven contains a **successful** mix of marine, industrial, and commercial businesses, **including one-of-a-kind shops and services that cater to the residents of adjacent neighborhoods, the wider City Bellingham-Whatcom**

**County community and visitors from more distant areas. that provide more than xxx family-wage jobs.**

- Fairhaven houses the Bellingham Cruise Terminal and the Bellingham Transportation Center, offering Amtrak, Alaska Ferry, local ferry, Greyhound and local bus services. **Fairhaven has groups of concerned stakeholders (residents and owners of homes, businesses, and commercial properties) that are facing the challenge of working together to better ensure its success.**

**ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS:**

- While the center of Fairhaven is only two and one half miles and **two three** traffic lights from Interstate 5, the volume of traffic on the connecting truck route is severely restricted by the narrow and winding local streets through which commercial traffic must pass at its western end (Donovan Avenue, 10th Street, and Harris Avenue). This limitation can only be overcome at great expense in terms of neighborhood disruption and the outlay of public funds. Consequently, the potential for expansion of businesses dependent on over-the-road transportation to receive supplies and ship products is necessarily limited.
- While Harris Bay provides a sheltered anchorage from the prevailing southwest winds, it is only deep enough to accommodate vessels of moderate size west of 4th Street. Due to the siltation at the mouth of Padden Creek, which is exacerbated by the railroad trestle and the presence of shallower water and extensive eelgrass beds, the shoreline to the northeast of **Padden Creek** is not conducive to water-dependent uses. **In addition, the water quality in Padden Creek, Padden Creek Estuary, Padden Creek Lagoon and in Harris Bay is seriously degraded by the free flow of untreated storm water from the City of Bellingham's Harris Street conduit and the catchment basins on the 37 acres of waterfront and near-waterfront property owned and/or managed by the Port of Bellingham.** (Repeats statements in Environmental Section.)
- Because Fairhaven lacks the land area necessary to house a population large enough to fully support the business in its commercial core, it is heavily dependent on visitors who rely on private transportation. Dramatic growth in the past four years has overtaxed Fairhaven's parking supply. Expanding surface parking is prohibitively expensive in terms of land use and structured parking is prohibitively expensive **in terms of cost and fears for personal safety.**

While the frequency of public transportation between Fairhaven and Downtown Bellingham has been greatly improved in the past two years, connections with adjacent neighborhoods have not. Frequent bus service circling through the South Hill, Happy Valley, South, and Edgemoor Neighborhoods with Fairhaven as a hub would greatly assist the 14,660 residents of the five Southside neighborhoods in taking daily advantage of Fairhaven's many resources.

- The recent dramatic increase of Fairhaven land values has made the attraction of new light manufacturing operations and the construction of new single-family houses problematic. The attraction of commercial firms with professional level employment opportunities and provision of more moderate-priced homes in other Southside neighborhoods are essential.

**FEDV (Fairhaven Economic Development Vision)-1:** The Fairhaven industrial area and commercial district **is the heart of** will continue to be a thriving urban village that serves all the **south side Southside** neighborhoods and the wider community.

FEDV-2: Fairhaven **is** will continue to be a place for people to live, work, and play in comfort and close proximity **with each other and with the natural environment.**

FEDG (Fairhaven Economic Development Goal)-1: Fulfill Fairhaven's role as a model of urban village development for other Bellingham neighborhoods.

**FEDP (Fairhaven Economic Development Policy)-1: Involve all Southside neighborhoods, the Fairhaven business sector, the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham in collaborative efforts to implement the urban village concept.**  
(Transfer to the Urban Village planning phase.)

**FEDP-2: Encourage the City of Bellingham to initiate a dialog among neighborhood representatives and professional staff and outside experts for formulating and implementing a City-wide economic development plan that recognizes neighborhood differences and aspirations.** (Transfer to the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan update process.)

**FEDP-3: Encourage the City of Bellingham to give economic development much greater emphasis by adding an economic development component to the City Council's Planning and Development Committee, and/or by assigning specific responsibility for economic development planning to one of the senior staff members in the Planning and Community Development Department and/or by engaging a fulltime Economic Development Coordinator for the City.**

FEDG-2: Enhance Fairhaven's economic viability in terms of the quality of life of its residents, the success of its businesses and the generation of tax revenue for the City of Bellingham.

FEDP-4: Support the efforts of the Old Fairhaven Association to formulate and implement an ongoing, comprehensive marketing program for Fairhaven.

FEDP-5: **Urge** Support the efforts of the Port of Bellingham to provide separate launching areas in Fairhaven for **hand-launched non-motorized** boats and trailerable power boats; to provide **additional pick-up moorings and docking**, and fueling facilities for larger private boats on Fairhaven's waterfront; **and to consider installing a breakwater to protect boats using Harris Bay from northwest winds.**

FEDP-6: Encourage the Port of Bellingham to maintain the Bellingham Bay Boating Center at its present location or to relocate it to a more suitable one nearby.

FEDP-67: Explore and support creative City and County tax policies, e.g., homestead freeze program, rewards for long-term business and residential ownership, and Local Improvement Districts (LIDs).

**FEDP-78: Advocate the allocation of Fairhaven’s municipal tax revenues to more adequately support the neighborhood’s capital improvement and public service needs. Note: The City prioritizes the allocation of all revenues in the annual budget process and through the development of capital facility plans, street construction plans, etc. This is done In an open, public process and all neighborhoods, including Fairhaven, are encouraged to participate to advocate for certain projects. The neighborhood plans are often used to develop capital facilities plans. Fairhaven is encouraged to clearly identify and prioritize their facility needs/desires as other neighborhoods have done in recent years.**

FEDG-3: Preserve Fairhaven’s distinctive social, historical and architectural character, maintaining a healthy balance among Fairhaven’s residential, industrial, commercial and retail sectors as the neighborhood grows and changes.

FEDP-8: Urge the City of Bellingham to develop land use codes supportive of historic preservation/rehabilitation and to consistently utilize design review to enforce them **in order to expand commercial activity, create jobs, attract visitors and protect/increase property values.**

FEDP-9: Support and attract unique, innovative, promising businesses that demonstrate commitment to building community, to stewardship of the environment and to exemplary customer service and employee relations. These businesses shall should complement the context, character and values of Fairhaven, provide its basic needs (such as employment, food, clothing, hardware, personal services, etc.), and **will** enhance its standard of living.

FEDP-101: Assure that legitimate industrial uses are not forced to commercialize.

FEDG-4: Acknowledge the important role that “anchor” firms play in each business sector and **encourage the Southside neighborhoods to** fully support these enterprises.

**FEDP-11: Encourage the Port of Bellingham to support Fairhaven Shipyard’s expansion by addition of a longer dry dock.**

FEDP-12: Encourage the Port of Bellingham to provide **All American Marine with a practical, proprietary suitable** launching access to **Harris Bay** all tenants that may require it.

**FEDP-13: Encourage the City of Bellingham and the Port of Bellingham to offer incentives to keep Aluminum Chambered Boats in the Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park.**