

Planning Commission
City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

February 19, 2008

RE: 2008 Group N-1 Proposal by The Fairhaven Neighborhood Association (Fairhaven Neighbors) to update the 1980 Fairhaven Neighborhood Plan

Honorable Commissioners:

On behalf of the Board of Fairhaven Neighbors, I respectfully request that you act to docket our Fairhaven Neighborhood Plan Update for action in 2008. Because of two perceived deficiencies, the Planning Director is recommending postponement. These are on the lack of consensus and inconsistencies with undisclosed sections of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. We believe that we have already met the first of these conditions and that we can resolve the second one within a few months.

Demonstrated Broad Based Support: We believe that the Questionnaire on key planning issues sent in March of 2007 to over one thousand stakeholders in Fairhaven and the 36% return rate, with not only answers but many heart-felt comments supporting the intent of our neighborhood plan update, proves we have broad-based support. There is consensus on all key issues. The results are enclosed, for your reference.

In April of 2007 Fairhaven Neighbors began a public process to write the first draft of the Plan. Many interested stakeholders as well as several prominent members of the Fairhaven business sector, including the applicant for the current Area 4 Rezone request, served on the five working subcommittees as well as helped create the vision statement. During the months that we were drafting our update we regularly posted interim revisions on the Fairhaven Neighbors website and invited comments and encouraged participation in our work sessions and regular meetings from all stakeholders. We made a concerted effort to complete the final draft by the December 3rd 2007 deadline to be considered in 2008, understanding the urgency and importance of this effort, especially to the owners of undeveloped properties.

We have emailed, posted notices locally and in the press, and invited participation from the whole neighborhood and business district. We have maintained a website with meeting notices and invitations to comment.

We revised our Bylaws in August to reaffirm that the business community has automatic membership in our neighborhood organization. Monthly meetings are posted and as more stakeholders attend meetings and take an active role in neighborhood business, the board representation will obviously reflect them.

Consistency with the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan: At the direction of the Planning Department, our neighborhood worked diligently and collegially for nearly a year to modernize our outmoded 1980 Neighborhood Plan. Fairhaven Neighbors used Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan as the template for our Draft Plan Neighborhood Plan Update. With direction from Planning Department Staff, we believe any remaining inconsistencies can be resolved in a timely fashion, within the next few months.

We ask you to compare the **three** letters opposing the Fairhaven Neighborhood Plan Update to the **390** business owners, land owners and residents of Fairhaven who began our process by completing the Questionnaire; the **twenty-five** citizens who spent six months and untold hours in meetings and emails drafting the plan; and the more than **sixty** people from the larger community who spent an evening in November 2007 commenting on the draft Plan. We believe this draft Neighborhood Plan has the requisite community support and incorporates the desires of the vast majority of the neighborhood.

Therefore, we respectfully request the Fairhaven Neighborhood Plan be recommended for docketing by the Planning Commission. With your support and recommendation, we are ready to move forward.

Yours truly,

Vince Biciunas, President
Fairhaven Neighbors

CC: Mayor Dan Pike
City Council
Planning Director Tim Stewart

Encl: Fairhaven Neighborhood Questionnaire Results, April 24, 2007