

DOWNTOWN PLAN

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON



Plan results: new commercial building



Plan results: new trail system



Plan results: new gateway structure



Plan results: Gateway residential infill

Downtown Plan and Design Guidelines

The City of Bellingham sits on a bay facing the San Juan Islands, an hour and a half north of Seattle. It is home to Western Washington University and has an active port. Its downtown contains a rich collection of historic buildings that offer opportunities for adaptive reuse. In the interest of revitalization, the City sought to develop a downtown plan and design guidelines as a framework for public and private investment.

Winter & Company devised a public participation process that included the general public and a steering committee. A series of special focus groups with property owners, developers and designers provided additional guidance. The project also addressed entry corridors into the downtown area.

Bellingham's downtown plan, the City Center Master Plan, links several key resources and illustrates opportunities for long-range improvements. A system of parks and trails rings the commercial core, providing recreational opportunities and alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian circulation. Special redevelopment sites are also identified. These include rehabilitation of select buildings and construction of compatible infill to provide in-town housing, live/work spaces and parking structures.



The City Center Master Plan includes recommendations for waterfront redevelopment, civic facilities, public art, wayfinding, traffic circulation, parking facilities and appropriate infill development.



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The Plan also calls for creating “festival streets” that are designed to accommodate automobiles on low-use days, but can be blocked off and used for special pedestrian events at other times. A focus of the Plan is a plaza that serves as the heart of the emerging civic center.

Surrounding the civic plaza are a series of arts parks, which are important components of an overall cultural facilities plan developed for the downtown area. Entry corridors into the City Center are highlighted with a special wayfinding system of streetscape elements and custom-designed signs.

SERVICES:

- » Downtown Plan
- » Design Guidelines
- » Wayfinding System
- » Cultural Plan

CLIENT:

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DATE:

1999



RAILROAD AVENUE ELEVATION

Before: Concept sketch for a new parking structure with mixed use "wrap"



Plan results: New parking structure with mixed use "wrap"



Rendering of projected new construction



Plan results: A new transit center and Farmers Market.



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Plan Results:



Plan results: New wayfinding system



Plan results: New public art

The design guidelines illustrate appropriate principles for building rehabilitation, additions and new infill. They also address street furniture and site design. Inspired by the Plan downtown Bellingham is alive with new projects.



Before: Oakland Block Building



After: Rehabilitation



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Arts District at Bay Street

The overall framework of the plan set the stage for the arts district and reinforced those element which were already emerging.

The District spans the area between the civic center to the north and commercial core to the south, and also connects to the Old Town district and the Bellingham Bay waterfront.

The City of Bellingham streetscape improvements make the district more walkable and community-oriented. Restaurants and retailers have been encouraged to spill out onto the sidewalks, and the addition of benches and plantings makes the streetscape attractive and functional.

Public plazas are being created at the Art & Children's Museum, the library, and key intersections in the downtown district, linking cultural institutions to the cityscape and promoting multi-use community gathering places. Revitalization in and around Maritime Heritage Park have already made the park a safer, more effective community destination.



Plan results: Arts District at Bay Street (Photo: PPS)



A sketch plan and resulting development for a sub-area focussing on an old hardware store (Morse Hardware). A bike trail connects the area with the city center, and a residential neighborhood.

