
Shoreline Advisory Committee

City of Langley, WA



Summary Report • January 2012



SUMMARY

The Shoreline Advisory Committee (SAC) is represented by a mix of stakeholder interests along the Langley Waterfront including high-bluff residential property owners, waterfront businesses and property owners, environmentalists, representatives from the city's boards and staff, and the Port District of South Whidbey. The purpose of the committee is to facilitate public involvement as part of the update to the city's Shoreline Master Program scheduled to be completed in 2013 that includes opportunities for public education, input and dialogue regarding major themes, a vision for the shoreline and goals and objectives.

The committee met biweekly from September 2011 through January 2012 and included sessions on the following topics:

- Shoreline Environment Designations
- High bluff residential development
- Commercial Development
- Central Waterfront Public Access and Circulation
- Restoration

Committee Membership

Dominique Emerson, 1st Street Residential Property Owner

Kevin Horan, High-Bluff Residential Property Owner

Roger Gage, Planning Advisory Board Representative

John Lawson, Parks and Open Space Commission Representative

Bob Getz, Beachwaters/Environmentalist

Marilyn Simmons, Nichols Brothers Boat Builders

Dennis Gregoire, Port of South Whidbey

Ex-Officio Member: Kathleen Waters, Wharf Street Property Owner

Staff: Jeff Arango, Director of Community Planning

SHORELINE ENVIRONMENT DESIGNATIONS

- Shoreline Residential Designation preserved along the residential portions of the shoreline
- *NEW* Urban Boat Harbor Aquatic Designation.
- *NEW* Aquatic Conservancy Designation along the Shoreline Residential portions of the shoreline
- *NEW* Shoreline Residential UGA and Shoreline Conservancy UGA for properties at the eastern edge of Edgecliff Dr. that are outside the city limits, but in the UGA

HIGH BLUFF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The committee spent approximately two months looking at the issue of high bluff residential development that ultimately comes down to balancing individual property rights for the use and enjoyment of private property including territorial views of Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains, the impacts development has on reducing the stability of the bluff and ultimately increasing the risk to people and property. If properties were not developed close to the top of high bluffs, or more specifically feeder bluffs that erode naturally and provide important ecological functions including beach nourishment, there would not be issues associated bluff erosion. Nonetheless, the city must balance the competing interests between environmental and ecological protection and individual property rights.

Residential Development Goals and Policies

1. Single family residential development is a preferred use within the shoreline district subject to the policies and regulations contained herein
2. Residential development in proximity to feeder high bluffs should be located outside of the 200' shoreline jurisdiction or outside the critical area buffer, whichever is greater.
3. Appropriate shoreline vegetation within 200' of the shoreline should be preserved to minimize the instability of high bluffs in order to protect people and property while allowing for the enjoyment of views.

4. Surface runoff from development sites over the top of the bluff should be minimized
5. Properties should not be subdivided adjacent to unstable bluffs unless each lot has a suitable building site located greater than 200' from the shoreline (Line of Ordinary High Water) or the required critical area buffer, whichever is greater.
6. Restoration of native vegetation and planting appropriate non-native species should be a requirement for mitigation of future development impacts, particularly on properties adjacent to feeder bluffs
7. Residential development should avoid geologically hazard areas where possible
8. As permitted by the city, selected trimming of natural vegetation for the enjoyment of views that do not increase bluff instability should be allowed if performed by a licensed arborist or other qualified professional.
9. Residential development is not a water-dependent use and shall not be permitted to locate over the water.
10. Impervious surfaces should be minimized
11. Development should be connected to the City's sanitary sewer system to minimize groundwater and reduce impacts on bluff stability
12. The City should promote a public education program for high bluff property owners on best management practices that capitalizes on the availability of existing resources from other organizations
13. Landfills, bulkheads, utilities and docks associated with residential development are subject to policies and regulations for those use categories.
14. The scenic qualities of the shoreline and the water should be considered in every application for residential development.

15. Residential development should not be permitted on shorelines or adjacent to unstable bluffs where bulkheading or other structural fortification would be necessary at the time of construction or in the foreseeable future to protect the development unless necessary for reasonable use of the property.
16. Residential uses should be designed to adequately protect water quality as well as shorelines within the development and adjacent areas.
17. Erosion control measures should utilize best management practices to protect water quality and shoreline resources.
18. Residential developers should be required to preserve shoreline vegetation in accordance with the policies of this Master Program and other City regulations.
19. Residential development should avoid environmentally sensitive and critical areas based on the criteria for designation in the Chapter 16 of the Langley Municipal Code and this master program.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development is another opportunity to connect the community with its waterfront through water enjoyment uses that make physical and visual connections while capitalizing on views of the sound and mountains. Despite its location on Puget Sound there is not a single retail or restaurant that is actually “on the water” and only a very few properties have views of the water.

Opportunities for commercial development on or over the water are limited due to the existence of only a handful of private properties zoned for commercial use along the waterfront. The low number of commercial properties on the shoreline is also due to limited uplands area between the toe of the high bluffs and the shoreline. Of those limited private properties there are even less that have direct water access. Other areas such as along the north side of First Street do have the potential to expand towards the waterfront. However, because of the existing dense development pattern along this area of First Street and the fact that development is built into the bluff with limited vehicular and pedestrian access to the water side infill development would require a comprehensive approach involving multiple property owners and high development costs. Other simplified development proposals along Seawall Park should

be explored including seasonal commercial retail/restaurant opportunities that may not involve permanent structures, displays for public art, cultural events and recreational opportunities.

The committee also supports the rezoning of the four residential properties at the north end of Sunrise Ln. to allow for commercial uses and in support of greater public and semi-public access. As those properties are converted to commercial or mixed-use land uses the city has an opportunity to increase and enhance public access and connectivity along the central waterfront. These four properties represent a major opportunity to connect Langley with the waterfront.

Commercial Goals and Policies

1. Support infill development on commercial zoned properties
2. Utilize infill development to make stronger connections to the waterfront for water enjoyment uses
3. Provide incentives to support infill development that improves public access, views or provides public or semi-public space such as flexibility in meeting parking requirements, and building height increases where substantial views are not blocked
4. Parking facilities should be located away from the waters edge and include measures to control both the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff



Figure 1: Waterfront Circulation and Public Access Diagram

CENTRAL WATERFRONT PUBLIC ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Despite the city's prominent location on the Puget Sound with majestic views of the sound and the Cascade Mountains there lacks a strong connection between the downtown and the waterfront. Few downtown properties have direct views of the sound and mountains and while there are numerous places to access the waterfront they are not well integrated with the vitality and liveliness of the downtown. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that the waterfront is often dark and cold particularly in the afternoon even in the summer because of its west facing

location. The use of high bluff locations such as the Boy and Dog Park and the walkway along Cascade Avenue do not have those same limitations, but are remove from the shoreline.

Connecting the downtown to the waterfront including the Langley Marina and Seawall Park is an important goal for the city to work towards. The committee explored options for connecting the downtown to the Langley Marina via a funicular railway from the terminus of fourth street to the foot of Wharf Street. The funicular will improve access to the marina by connecting the marina with parking in the downtown area as parking is extremely limited in the marina uplands properties.

Public Access and Circulation Goals

1. Improve and expand connections within the waterfront area including connections between the waterfront and downtown and between shoreline areas including the Seawall Park and Marina
2. Improve public access from the downtown and remote parking facilities to the marina through the use of non-vehicular connections
3. Develop a pedestrian connection between Seawall Park and the Marina
 - a. Alternative I: Pedestrian connection along Sunrise Ln. *Preferred*
 - b. Alternative II: Boardwalk connection along the Seawall
4. Improve the Cascade Walkway to create a linear promenade with improved seating and recreation areas.
5. Support stronger connections to the waterfront via a public use dock and/or pier

RESTORATION

The 2003 Shoreline Master Program Guidelines administered by the Department of Ecology requires all SMP's to have a restoration plan. The following summarizes the committee discussion and consideration of a shoreline restoration plan:

- Discussed the concept of “no-net loss” of shoreline ecological functions and the importance of establishing the baseline conditions.

- Langley waterfront identified as “Least Degraded” in the Island County Shoreline Master Program Map Folio
- Larger scale mitigation opportunities will be incorporated into future marina expansion projects including removal of the Hein Dock and the Sunken Tire Reef
- There are limited opportunities for restoration without disruption established shoreline stabilization measures including the seawall and bulkheads

Restoration Policies

1. Achieve no net loss of shoreline ecological functions
2. Require mitigation as necessary to achieve a no net loss of shoreline ecological functions
3. Developments should avoid a loss of shoreline ecological functions where possible
4. Developments should include measures to manage the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff through minimizing runoff and treating runoff through retention and detention
5. Improve water quality