

**York Neighborhood Association
1351 Humboldt St
Bellingham, WA 98225**

November 30, 2005

To: Grant Deger
Chair, Bellingham City Council

Joan Beardsley
Chair, Bellingham Planning Commission

Jorge Vega
Planning Director
City of Bellingham

Re: Letter of Intent requesting updating the York Neighborhood Plan

On behalf of the York Neighborhood Association, we here submit a Letter of Intent to update the York Neighborhood portion of the Comprehensive Plan. Our plan was last updated in 1980. The York Neighborhood Association asserts that this has led to and continues to lead to a rudderless situation for our neighborhood and the surrounding City of Bellingham. Creating an environment of uncertainty for the residents and those wishing to purchase, develop, improve or maintain property in the York Neighborhood. According to BMC 20.20.020 the City Council, Planning and Development Commission or Planning Director may initiate consideration of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan at any time. In light of the over-extended delay in updating our Neighborhood Plan, in light of Growth Management Act requirements, and further, in light of recent changes in the City of Bellingham's planning initiatives, we respectfully request that the City Council docket our request for an update of the York Neighborhood portion of Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan for consideration in 2006.

Our association has consulted the BMC and the City Planning Department in preparing for this task. As a result of a published General Meeting of the Association we have established a Planning Committee to take a lead in the process and to assure public participation. Our Planning Committee has followed the BMC 20.20.xxx including meeting with members of the Planning Department and now by submitting this Letter of Intent.

The York Neighborhood was the first subdivision in the town of New Whatcom, now Bellingham, and the majority of our homes were built between 1890 and 1910. According to the York Neighborhood Plan, adopted in 1980 and last amended in 2004, the York Neighborhood is "a convenient and well-liked place to live. Families of all ages live in the neighborhood, with a recent trend emerging of younger adults buying homes in which to settle and raise families. This reverses an earlier trend of conversion of many single-family homes to duplexes or boarding houses."

Our purpose in updating our Neighborhood Plan is to provide certainty to home and business owners in the York Neighborhood and long-term certainty to York's and Bellingham's character. The alternative to updating our plan is to invite more contention and failed development attempts at the cost to every party involved, Planning Department staff, neighbors and developers alike.

In addition, under the state Growth Management Act the City of Bellingham is required to plan for the preservation of such neighborhoods. Unfortunately the present situation provides neither a plan for preservation nor a plan for future reasonable growth.

We wish to state explicitly that it is not our intention to reduce our current density: We do not wish to halt reasonable growth. Nor do we wish to make radical changes without regard for adjacent neighborhoods. We simply wish to reaffirm the current Neighborhood Plan with reasonable improvements to better reflect the environment of the City and the York Neighborhood as it stands a quarter century since our plan was last updated.

BMC 20.20.060 Sections C and D provide for criteria for Comprehensive Plan Amendments and we've organized our rationale to answer the explicit questions in those sections:

An update is consistent with the State Growth Management Act and our Plan's out-of-date status is inconsistent with the requirements of the GMA

We believe that docketing our update request is appropriate at this time because RCW 36.70A.130 states that cities are allowed to revise their comprehensive plans and in 2005 the Legislature further clarified that there is "and the need to ensure that land use measures reflect the collective wishes of its citizenry."

RCW 36.70A.020 lists the planning goals of the State Growth Management Act. Updating our Plan now is consistent with all goals, particularly with the following:

(11) Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

(13) Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.

Circumstances have changed sufficiently since adoption of the last update

Much has happened surrounding the York Neighborhood and our plan needs to reflect the increased pressures on the neighborhood.

The Comprehensive Plan has changed significantly in 25 years

The Comprehensive Plan has been updated several times since 1980. Most recently, significant tracts of text have been removed from the Comprehensive Plan as well as the York Neighborhood Plan.

Time to catch up and assure proper land use, public safety and continued integration with surrounding areas of Bellingham

The York Neighborhood needs to review its plan to assure that land use reflects the vision already set in the current Plan as well as the evolving vision of York land and business owners. It is time to review traffic patterns that have evolved over 25 years since the plan was last updated and to assure public safety. It is time to review neighborhood standards in a world that has since put computers in most York homes compared to a time when the IBM PC had not even been invented yet! It is time that the York Neighborhood Plan reflect the design concerns of the citizens of York and Bellingham.

Long term benefits of the update

York has received the long term benefits of the hard work and planning of the Association and the City of Bellingham back in 1980. It is time to renew that vision and update the Plan to extend the benefit of those efforts as well as recent efforts of the citizens of Bellingham and our neighborhood.

Thank you for considering our request to docket updating the York Neighborhood Plan for 2006. We believe that this update will improve certainty for the residents, property owners and businesses of the York Neighborhood and surrounding areas. It will also provide consistency with the Growth Management Act and with the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. If you have further questions please do not hesitate to call Tom Scott.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of the York Neighborhood Planning Committee,

Thomas R. Scott
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