

Edgemoor Neighborhood Plan - Neighborhood Approved 7/2011

I. Neighborhood Character

The primary goal of the Edgemoor Neighborhood Plan is to preserve and enhance the existing qualities of the neighborhood and to improve safety and accessibility in compliance with the City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

The quiet residential character of Edgemoor Neighborhood is a valued asset. Although densities and housing styles vary throughout the neighborhood, the entire planning area is zoned single family residential. The western half of the neighborhood contains single family homes on large, well-landscaped lots. The term "rural estate" has been used to describe this portion of the neighborhood where magnificent views of Bellingham Bay and the San Juan Islands are a highly valued resource. The northern portion of the neighborhood has been platted into smaller lots and the contemporary homes are afforded views northerly of Bellingham Bay and the city. The eastern half of the neighborhood, generally east of Fieldston Road, does not have the panoramic marine view, but in many cases territorial views of Chuckanut Mountain are available. Much of the southern portion of the neighborhood overlooks Chuckanut Bay. A large, heavily wooded peninsula, known as Clarks Point, forms the western boundary of Chuckanut Bay.

The presence of railroad tracks along the westerly and northerly boundaries of the neighborhood limits access to the waterfront (as noted later), and also negatively affects the quiet enjoyment of properties in much of the neighborhood due to whistle and rail noise.

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN AREAS IMPACTED BY RAIL TRAFFIC, SUCH TRAFFIC SHOULD BE CONTROLLED AND REGULATED TO ALL POSSIBLE EXTENT TO LIMIT WATER, AIR, SOIL AND NOISE POLLUTION.

Edgemoor does not have commercial establishments, such as supermarkets, gas stations or restaurants. It has no elementary school, and neither a police nor fire station. Consequently, Edgemoor is dependent on the affairs of the adjacent neighborhoods. In a larger sense, Edgemoor is an integral part of the greater Fairhaven area which is visually attractive, vibrant, and full of character. It is adjacent to Fairhaven Park and a short distance from Marine Park. As part of Bellingham, it provides a very desirable place to live, which is somewhat secluded from the rest of the City. The natural features of Edgemoor enhance the character of the neighborhood.

Action statements in this plan are based on a variety of sources. They include the results of a questionnaire distributed to residents of the neighborhood in 2007, visioning workshops including members of the Edgemoor Neighborhood Association, comments by residents, City staff and a variety of others. It draws on the 1980 Edgemoor Neighborhood Plan and the material gathered by the neighborhood attendees at City-sponsored planning academies. The neighborhood plan is intended to complement the City of Bellingham's Comprehensive Plan and assists in the development process of the Edgemoor Neighborhood.

II. Open Space

The topography of Edgemoor includes a ridge of hills running north-south east of Fieldston Road from a crest close to the intersection of Fieldston and Hawthorn towards Chuckanut Bay. This allows excellent

views to the north and west of Bellingham Bay and to the south of Chuckanut Bay and the waterway toward Anacortes. Sites to the east of the ridge can have a view of Mount Baker and undisturbed forest.

The natural features of Edgemoor as well as topography influence the quality of life of the neighborhood. Deer, raccoons, squirrels, possum and coyotes are among the residents. Eagles, great blue herons, and numerous other birds nest in the trees throughout the neighborhood. The stands of Douglas fir, cedar, poplar and aspen, as well as plantings, lend character to the neighborhood, clean and refresh the air, moderate drainage and stabilize slopes. The trees provide shade and protection from wind. Flora tends to be a home to wildlife and a buffer between houses. However, trees can interrupt and gradually obscure views. Without a City policy, neighbors must resolve conflicts involving views on their own.

AN URBAN FOREST PLAN IS NEEDED TO BALANCE CONFLICTS BETWEEN TREES AND VIEWS.

Clarks Point on the southwest end of the neighborhood is an important natural feature. It has been preserved in a natural state through a conservation easement held by the Whatcom Land Trust. Neighborhood public access is limited to two viewpoints accessed by trails that are available during daylight hours. The trail heads are located approximately 150 feet south of the south end of Fieldston Road and 50 feet north of the "Private Drive" entrance gate. Parking is available on Fieldston Road north of the "No Parking Tow Away" signs. Restrictions on the use of the view points are posted.

There is a trail on the north side of Chuckanut Bay Tidelands which starts at the west end of Fairhaven Avenue in the South Neighborhood. There is access to the trail from Sea Pines Road. Use of the full extent of the trail is limited to times below high tide.

CONNECTION OF THE TRAIL ON THE NORTH SIDE OF CHUCKANUT BAY TO THE EDGEMOOR STREET SYSTEM VIA THE EXISTING TRAIL EASEMENT IS NEEDED TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO THE TRAIL.

Bellingham Bay and its coves surround the neighborhood on three sides although access to the waterfront is restricted to the west and north by the railroad, a formidable barrier to the beach. Large rocks (riprap) placed to prevent erosion along the railroad embankment inhibit marine life which would typically exist on a beachfront.

The tracks for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad limit access to the waterfront of Bellingham Bay on the west side of Edgemoor. The closest access point to the western beach front is at Marine Park in the Fairhaven Neighborhood to the north of Edgemoor. 83% of the residents to the questionnaire indicated some degree of concern with access to the waterfront.

The City of Bellingham comprehensive plan incorporated the following in the 2005 update: *The vision for Chuckanut and Edgemoor is one that emphasizes conservation and public access. The rugged shoreline and tidelands will remain accessible only by water or on foot. Eventually a safe water-grade trail is envisioned that will connect to both Fairhaven and the Coast Millennium Trail near Woodstock Farm. Woodstock Farm will become a new city park, and the railroad causeway across Chuckanut Bay will be perforated to improve water flow and allow for marine habitat enhancement. Kayak and other hand-carry landings will give boaters access to various points along the shoreline.*

A MARINE ACCESS PLAN NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED TO ALLOW GREATER USE OF THE WATERFRONT BY RESIDENTS. THE NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORTS THE VISION FOR CHUCKANUT AND EDMOOR AS STATED IN THE WATERFRONT FUTURES GROUP VISION AND FRAMEWORK PLAN WHICH WAS INCORPORATED INTO THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN 2005.

On the west side of the neighborhood, the Edgemoor Lagoon abuts the lot at the west end of Willow Road. That lot is owned by a subsection of Edgemoor Neighborhood incorporated as the Old Edgemoor Property Owners Association. A chain and signage at the west end of Willow Road off Bayside Road restrict access to the lagoon property.

ACCESS TO THE LAGOON WOULD BE A DESIREABLE ASSET TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Edgemoor has no park within the neighborhood boundaries. Residents make use of Fairhaven Park in the South Neighborhood directly to the east across Chuckanut Drive. Fairhaven Park's amenities are significant with its parking area, field, assembly building and access to the trail system to the east. However, the field on the south end of the park is too often waterlogged and the park, as it stands today, is not large enough to protect the hilly backdrop of the Fairhaven area to the east, commonly called the 100 Acre Woods or Chuckanut Ridge. The questionnaire identified significant interest in expanding Fairhaven Park to the 100 Acre Woods/Chuckanut Ridge and overwhelming disapproval of development of that property.

DRAINAGE OF THE PLAYING FIELD IN FAIRHAVEN PARK NEEDS IMPROVEMENT.

EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF THE 100 ACRE WOODS/CHUCKANUT RIDGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC.

III. Public Facilities and Utilities

Fairhaven Middle School is the only public facility in Edgemoor Neighborhood. Public use of the school is limited to major public meetings.

Fairhaven Middle School grounds provide one of the most convenient areas for active recreation in the neighborhood. However, non vehicular access from most of the area requires travel on either Fieldston/Hawthorn Roads or Chuckanut Drive, neither of which have adequate pedestrian or bicycle improvements.

Cars on the southeast side of Hawthorne drop off and pick up students at the beginning and end of the school day, creating congestion in this area. When school buses and students who walk or ride bikes to school are added to the mix, together with neighborhood commuters heading for the 5-leg intersection, the potential for a serious accident is high. Speeding is also an issue in this area, not only at these times of the day, but in general.

A SPEED BUMP OR OTHER TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES SHOULD BE INSTALLED ACROSS HAWTHORN, SOUTHWEST OF FAIRHAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL AND WEST OF THE BAYSIDE RD INTERSECTION.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO FAIRHAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL.

Public utilities in Edgemoor include water and sewer. Private utilities provide cable, phone, power and natural gas. Much of Edgemoor has underground power lines allowing undisturbed views of Bellingham Bay and Chuckanut Bay.

THE WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS GENERALLY ADEQUATE. HOWEVER, IN THE LESS DEVELOPED SOUTHERN PART OF EDGEMOOR, SOME ADDITIONAL "LOOPING" IS DESIREABLE.

AS DEVELOPMENT OCCURS, ADDITIONAL LOOPING OF THE WATER DISTRIBUTION AND ELECTRICAL POWER SYSTEMS SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED.

Of continuing concern is the storm water sewer system. Storm drainage has proved to be a problem in the Edgemoor Neighborhood in recent years. As streets were developed, enclosed storm drainage was excluded and, for the most part, shallow roadside ditches carry storm water runoff. Although culverts have been installed in some places, an overall storm sewer system is absent. While development of an overall storm drainage system is needed to alleviate overflow problems, it is also important that new sources of storm water runoff be required to maintain existing levels of drainage volumes so as not to exacerbate problems downstream. The Comprehensive Drainage Plan, authored by Kramer, Chin, and Mayo in 1973, indicates trunk storm sewer improvements needed in the neighborhood and more recent study by the Public Works Department has more specifically identified the overall drainage needs.

AN OVERALL STORMWATER DRAINAGE PLAN FOR THE EDGEMOOR NEIGHBORHOOD SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED. THE PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS EXISTING CAPACITY ISSUES AND PROVIDE STORMWATER SYSTEMS IN AREAS NOT CURRENTLY SERVED. NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD ANALYZE THEIR STORM WATER RUN-OFF TO ENSURE THE PROJECT DOES NOT EXACERBATE ANY DOWNSTREAM DRAINAGE PROBLEMS.

IV. CIRCULATION

The primary northerly access into the neighborhood is across the 12th St Bridge on Chuckanut, and thence west on Hawthorne, Willow, Broad, 16th, Viewcrest or Sea Pines. A secondary access from the north is provided by 4th St, through Edgemoor Terrace into Bayside Rd. Emergency services, police and utility maintenance all enter Edgemoor from the north. From the south, access can be gained from 30th St onto Chuckanut. Although access was generally rated adequate in the neighborhood questionnaire, most of the features of the 12th St bridge and 5-leg intersection were cited in responses and comments as "Poor" or requiring attention.

The 12th Street Bridge is a WSDOT bridge on a State Highway (SR 11) and is the primary gateway to the Edgemoor Neighborhood. The Edgemoor neighborhood considers the 12th St bridge unsafe.

INVESTIGATION AND PLANNING FOR IMPROVED ACCESS ALTERNATIVES TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN ADDITION TO THE 12TH ST BRIDGE NEED TO BE UNDERTAKEN. PRIMARY ACCESS MUST BE MAINTAINED ON THE NORTH END OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO ENSURE CONNECTION WITH THE GREATER SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY. THIS IS CRITICAL IN THE EVENT OF INCREASED DEVELOPMENT SOUTH OF THE 12TH ST BRIDGE.

Five roadways approach each other in the intersection of 12th Street, Chuckanut, Hawthorn, Parkridge, and Cowgill. Four of the approach roads are subject to a traffic signal. The two approaches that line up directly with each other, Parkridge and 12th, have the least through flow. The remaining unsignalized approach, Cowgill, intersects Hawthorn within 50 feet of the intersection at its own stop-signed tee intersection which adds to delay and confusion. No left turn lane is provided on any approach, which is particularly of concern to drivers approaching from the south on Chuckanut who wish to turn left to Parkridge or Hawthorn. There is currently congestion when Fairhaven Middle School students are being picked up or dropped off and at the evening rush hour.

THE 5-LEG INTERSECTION (12TH ST, CHUCKANUT, HAWTHORN, PARKRIDGE, COWGILL) SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO ELIMINATE EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY CONFLICTS AND SIGHT DISTANCE PROBLEMS.

Current transportation options in Edgemoor include private motor vehicles, bicycles, motorcycles, WTA buses, school buses and walking, with the primary mode of transportation being private motor vehicles. Bicycles and motorcycles are seen extensively on Chuckanut Drive. Walkers are out throughout the day, whether students on their way to Fairhaven Middle School, shoppers heading for Fairhaven, exercisers, dog walkers, families heading to Fairhaven Park or kids on their way to the pool in the summer. Pedestrian traffic is most often on the street. School buses circulate through the neighborhood. The WTA route loops through the neighborhood from Chuckanut, going southwest on Hawthorne, south on Fieldston, and east on Willow to intersect and head back toward Fairhaven on Chuckanut.

WTA SHOULD BE CONTACTED ABOUT THE ADDITION OF A BUS SHELTER AT THE HAWTHORN RD/COWGILL STOP NEAR FAIRHAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL.

86% of respondents to the neighborhood questionnaire rated the street system in Edgemoor as “Good” or “Adequate”. 49% rated sidewalks as “Poor” and 44% rated pedestrian safety as “Poor”. Hills, curves, sloped driveways and landscaping at corners limit visibility of both drivers and pedestrians. Speeding on Hawthorn Rd, Fieldston Rd, Willow Rd and Viewcrest is common.

SPEED BUMPS OR OTHER TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES SHOULD BE INSTALLED ON FIELDSTON RD BETWEEN WILLOW AND VIEWCREST.

The intersections of Hawthorn & Briar, Fieldston & Willow and Middlefield & Hawthorn have sight issues due to vegetation. Hawthorn and Briar Roads intersect at a tee with a large tree in the center of the intersection, confusing drivers as to who has the right of way.

THE INTERSECTION OF HAWTHORN AND BRIAR ROADS SHOULD BE SIGNED AS A ROUNDABOUT.

VEGETATION AT ALL INTERSECTIONS SHOULD BE CUT BACK TO CITY STANDARDS.

State Highway 11 (Chuckanut Drive) forms the eastern boundary of the Edgemoor neighborhood. Use of Fairhaven Park and the sidewalk on the east side of Chuckanut Drive is limited by the barrier of the highway.

IMPROVE THE CROSSWALK FROM WILLOW RD ACROSS CHUCKANUT

The lack of sidewalks poses a problem on many neighborhood streets, particularly after dark and during bad weather, when visibility is restricted, or in areas where landscaping extends to the street. The sidewalk on Chuckanut does not extend beyond Iris Lane to the south, limiting pedestrian access for residents of the Briza subdivision. The neighborhood questionnaire established priorities for sidewalk additions with a sidewalk on Fieldston Road ranking highest.

FIELDSTON RD, HAWTHORN RD AND WILLOW RD WEST OF FIELDSTON SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO 28 FEET IN WIDTH WITH THICKENED EDGES AND A PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE PATH ON ONE SIDE IN AREAS WHERE THERE ARE NO SIDEWALKS.

SIDEWALKS NEED TO BE ADDED ALONG FIELDSTON FROM HAWTHORN TO WILLOW, ALONG BAYSIDE ROAD FROM HAWTHORN TO ACACIA AND ALONG CHUCKANUT FROM BRIZA TO WILLOW.

V. Housing

Existing housing in Edgemoor is composed primarily of single family residential units. The only current exception is Lairmont Manor, which operates under a Conditional Use Permit with several apartments and meeting facilities. Homes are generally valued at or significantly above the median value of single family homes in Bellingham as a whole, with water views having a major influence on values.

BUILDINGS AND PLANTINGS SHOULD BE SITED TO AVOID OBSTRUCTION OF VIEWS OF OTHERS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE (20.16.020 S. (3). PRESERVATION OF NATURAL FEATURES, DISTINCTIVE TOPOGRAPHIC FORMS, STANDS OF TREES, OTHER NATURAL FEATURES AND VIEW CORRIDORS SHOULD BE A PRIORITY.

Many homes have been remodeled and/or expanded and most are well maintained. There are few vacant lots and few houses are rentals. As in other neighborhoods, some rental homes are indistinguishable from other housing while others create jarring notes with lifestyles, maintenance and parking.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORTS LICENSING OF LANDLORDS AND BETTER RESPONSE TO NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLAINTS AND/OR ENFORCEMENT REGARDING VIOLATIONS OF NOISE, PARKING, OCCUPANCY NUMBERS AND HOUSING CONDITION.

Edgemoor residents desire changes in existing housing and new housing to be “...compatible with the essential character of the neighborhood...” (as referenced in Ordinances 20.16.010 E, etc), particularly as regards the size of buildings. City codes regulating building size (over 5,500 sq ft) can be pre emptied on an individual basis through the conditional use process – a discretionary decision made by the Hearings Examiner. Notice of application for a CUP (conditional use permit) must be sent to the owner of any property within 500 feet of the proposed CUP and neighbors can express their concerns at a hearing.

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD SHOULD ALSO BE SENT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION.

VI . Land Use and Maps

Area 1

DESCRIPTION

Area 1 includes all but the north side of the Shorewood subdivision and the houses on the west side of Briar Road north of Bayside Road. There are no sidewalks on the street, the lots tend to be large, utility lines are buried and the houses are generally newer.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

Area 2

DESCRIPTION

Area 2 includes the area south of Cowgill to the north side of Bayside road, thence from the east end of Bayside Place to the next to last house on Bayside Rd before the Briar Rd intersection. This area is representative of subdivisions designed in the early 1970’s having wide streets, including curbs, gutters and sidewalks on both sides. The lots are smaller than many others in Edgemoor Neighborhood. Many are on a slope graded down to Bellingham Bay to the north which affords them excellent views of the Bay.

THE HOUSES ON THE NORTH SIDE OF BAYSIDE ROAD FROM THE EAST END OF BAYSIDE PLACE TO THE NEXT TO THE LAST HOUSE ON BAYSIDE ROAD BEFORE THE BRIAR ROAD INTERSECTION DO NOT CONFORM IN DESIGN OR USE TO AREA 4. THEY SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN AREA 2 . ALSO, NOTE THAT THE CITY BASE MAPS IDENTIFY ACACIA PLACE AS ACADIA PLACE.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Medium Density

Area 3

Area 3 is the Fairhaven Middle School and adjacent playing fields.

Land Use Designation: Public

Area 4

DESCRIPTION

Area 4 includes those properties serviced by the following streets: Park Ridge Rd, Underhill Rd, Hawthorne Rd, Middlefield Rd, Briar & Bayside roads to their intersection on the north with Area 1, and Fieldston Rd to its intersection with Viewcrest Rd. In addition, it includes those properties to the west of the Jones Property and to the North of Clarks Point. The area consists of large lots exemplifying the “rural estate” portion of the Edgemoor neighborhood with the exception of Lairmont Manor which includes a “Manor” house with meeting facilities and apartments. Street widths vary depending on the time of development of the various subdivisions. Utilities are buried throughout the area. There are excellent views to the west of Bellingham Bay and Lummi Island as well as north from Middlefield Road. Recently, some infill has occurred and some houses have been renovated or replaced.

AREA 4 SHOULD BE MODIFIED TO INCLUDE THOSE PROPERTIES TO THE WEST OF THE JONES PROPERTY AND TO THE NORTH OF CLARKS POINT WHICH ARE SOUTH OF THE CURRENT SOUTHERLY AREA LINE.

CITY BASE MAPS AND STREET SIGNS SHOULD BE RECONCILED TO CLEAR UP THE AMBIGUITY WHICH IDENTIFIES FIELDSTON ROAD AS FIELDSTONE.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

Area 5

DESCRIPTION

Area 5 includes those properties served by Clark Rd between Linden and Willow, Willow Rd Place, Cypress, Mulberry, Fern and Everglade Rds, Lyla Lane and that portion of Willow Rd to which these roads join. It consists of lots smaller than those in the adjacent areas to the west and north. Willow Road which runs east-west on the north of the area is a major access road with curb, gutter and sidewalk on both sides from Fieldston to Chuckanut Drive.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

Area 6

DESCRIPTION

Area 6 includes the cul-de-sacs off the east end of Willow Road, all properties north of Viewcrest Road to the boundary of Area 5 and all properties accessed from the south side of Viewcrest Rd from Chuckanut Drive to the Jones Property in addition to the current area description. Lot sizes vary through the area. The westerly and southerly perimeter of the area afford marine views.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

Area 7

DESCRIPTION

Area 7 includes the land known as the Briza subdivision and the Jones property (a large area of undeveloped land to the west of Sea Pines Road). Most of the property slopes from north to South toward Chuckanut Bay. On the east end, the Briza subdivision consists of houses on steep slopes. Immediately to

the south of Briza is an undeveloped, City-owned area comprised of a large estuarine wetland (marsh) adjacent to Chuckanut Bay.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

Area 8:

DESCRIPTION

Area 8 is comprised of the northerly portion of the Shorewood subdivision. This 1.55 acre parcel of land is designated as an eight-lot cluster subdivision with views oriented toward Bellingham Bay. It is subject to restrictions which allow attached housing on the west end of the subarea and an undeveloped section to the east to protect a great blue heron colony and provide an occasional nesting place for bald eagles. The preservation of mature growth timber is important.

Land Use Designation: Eight Lot Cluster Subdivision

Area 9

CLARK'S POINT, OUR PROPOSED AREA 9, IS THE AREA SOUTH OF THE RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY OWNED BY THE CLARK FAMILY AND IS PROTECTED THROUGH A CONSERVATION EASEMENT HELD BY THE WHATCOM LAND TRUST. IT IS UNRELATED IN DENSITY, CHARACTER, ZONING AND USE TO AREA 7 WHERE IT CURRENTLY LIES. IN ORDER TO MORE ACCURATELY IDENTIFY THE POINT, IT SHOULD BE DESIGNATED AREA 9 IN THE SAME FASHION AS AREA 8 IS SEPARATE FROM AREA 1.

Land Use Designation: Single Family Residential, Low Density

AREAS 2, 4, 6 AND 7, WITH THE ADDITION OF AREA 9, NEED TO BE AMENDED ON THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM MUNICIPAL CODE, 20.00.06 - EDGEMOOR NEIGHBORHOOD TABLE OF ZONING REGULATIONS - TO REFLECT THE MODIFIED AREA DESCRIPTIONS ABOVE.

Edgemoor Land Use Map with proposed area changes: