



Case Study: Solving problems with an opposition group.

A critical situation came to the city of Blaine, Washington during the construction of a new water treatment facility near Semiahmoo resort.

Native American remains were discovered and this immediately halted all construction and a new location was desperately needed.



David Christensen leading the WTF charrette

The most ideal location from an engineering point of view, was to locate the facility on Marine drive near an existing outfall station near the southernmost end of land.

The exact location was located on a one mile spit of land, extending from the downtown area and south to the marina and waterfront activities. The area has a history of being called Cain's Wharf and all of the Port of Bellingham activities dominated the east

side of Marine drive. The City-owned west side is currently open space and dedicated areas for future commercial and recreational development.

This location was previously rejected by a citizens committee and the city council. The city wanted to revisit the idea, as the area was already underdevelopment and a master plan had been developed. They wanted to know if a water treatment facility could be added to the overall master plan.



Due to time constraints and a desire for an inclusive process, a design charrette format was selected for the process of discovery and approval. Over the course of only 3 days participants including city staff, port officials, council members, design engineers, citizen activists, committee members and other concerned citizens met and discussed all the facts, opportunities and issues regarding building the WTF at this location.

The charrette was lead by the following objectives, goals and issues:

Objectives

- Facilitation of an inclusive, public participatory process for public approval.
- Provide a building and site design that



integrates and enhances future public improvements as well as future commercial and cultural facilities.

- The final design should add value to the public lands in the long term, while providing a design that meets current budgetary constraints.

Challenge

During the 1/30/04 WTF Master Plan Charette, facilitated by CDM, there were several key issues from participants that resulted in selection of a Port land parcel, directly southwest of the final selected site.

The Port would not participate in a trade, but some of the issues are valid at the final selected site.

Advantages:

- Potentially least disruption to existing viable businesses
- Possible market for water reuse with future adjacent uses
- Provides needed infrastructure improvements to this area
- Site Enhancements will add value for redevelopment
- Possible Interpretive Exhibits for public along w/ Admin. Areas.
- Potential unique Architectural elements as visual draw

- Potential cupola “tower” for birding/observation &/or Lighthouse reconstruction

Issues to overcome:

- Need for odor mitigation
- Possible Brownfield development issues.
- Concern for integration into Marine Park/ Public Open Space & View preservation.
- Truck/service access, Lighthouse reconstruction & integration option, parking, view preservation / open space utilization, visual bulk of MBR facility, aesthetics.

Strategies

- Facilitate design charettes to include public in decision-making process for “buy-in”. CDM has successfully facilitated over 50 charettes; 5 for the City of Blaine including the Marine Drive (Cain’s wharf) master plan and the WRTF master plan. A Northwest AIA Design Award was received for both the WTF and The downtown boardwalk charette.
- Provide overall master plan for area that will integrate as funds become available for future improvements and “added value” areas with regular monitoring of budget.
- Work closely with Public Works and design engineers to vary height and bulk of building to create design modulation that will reduce apparent scale.
- Integration of citizen efforts to reconstruct Lighthouse structure with/ or near. MBR facility.

Over the course of the all-day charette, the group discovered that a new type of enclosed, smaller, MBR Treatment Facility can easily be integrated into the area with out impinging on the overall goals of the marine drive master planning committee.

At the same time we found ways of adding value to by rehabilitating additional streets, making

trail improvements, and re-building an historic lighthouse structure which included educational resources about the area, water conservation and waterfront activities.

The concept of a cultural area was also planned which included new boardwalks, a maritime museum and renovation of historic fishing vessels. The MBR facility could be easily integrated into the overall master plan by design it in such a way to look like the rest of the traditional marine type structures.

The overall result of the charrette was that vistas from downtown and future spit development are enhanced and preserved, while creating a small waterfront village/activity area. It also reinforces Blaine's commitment to the birding & environmental concerns as well as commercial activity. The collaborative process created a solution that became a win-win for all concerned.

To the shock and surprise of all of those in attendance, a unanimous approval was given to a project that could add, not detract, value to the City of Blaine.



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