



April 13, 2012

The Port of Edmonds
236 Admiralty Way
Edmonds, WA 98020

Attention: Director Bob McChesney and Commissioners Gouge, Preston, Faires, Orvis and Block

Subject: Requested Comments
Harbor Square Preliminary Redevelopment Vision 2012-2013

Director and Commissioners:

ACE has been invited by the Port to comment on the Harbor Square Preliminary Redevelopment Vision 2012-2013, and submits the following to you for your consideration:

Who Is ACE?

ACE was organized in 2004 by a group of concerned citizens in response to a proposal being considered to increase building heights in the downtown business district. Ultimately, existing height limits were retained. Over time, our efforts have broadened into other areas, but have always remained focused on those things that make Edmonds such a great place to live, work and play.

To generally re-iterate our goals and orientation: *ACE supports responsible development that respects and complements the character of Edmonds – its small town atmosphere and its general low-level architecture. We promote preservation of the natural environment in our City – its streams, beaches, parks and open space. We also attempt to provide citizens with accurate information about land use activities that allows them to make informed decisions and provide relevant input to our elected leaders.*

Why Are We Commenting on the Current Harbor Square Preliminary Redevelopment Vision?

We commend the Port for its transparency in this process thus far, which has included both open houses and input from a steering committee which included a diverse group of people from the community, three of whom have been active ACE members.

We make these comments because the Port requested our input and support as part of its process. In early 2012, they contacted us and asked if we would consider their current vision for the long term

redevelopment of Harbor Square and offer our input. We discussed the this vision in our January and February meetings, the second of which was attended by Port Director McChesney and Commissioner Faires to answer our questions and hear the concerns of some of our members. Since then, we have discussed whether a response was appropriate at this time and if so, what that response should be and include. At this time, we offer the following input.

Comments on the Port Harbor Square Redevelopment Vision

As stated in the recent mailing and as explained to us in our February meeting, we understand that in 2012 the Port will prepare a master plan and development strategy for Harbor Square based on the general “mixed use” concepts illustrated in the recently released “Harbor Square Preliminary Redevelopment Vision 2012-2013 – Phase II Planning Process Summary December 2010 to June 2011” (which we will refer to hereinafter as the “Brochure”). It will then submit an application ~~for~~ through the Planning Board to the City Council for a Comprehensive Plan amendment based on its master plan.

Accordingly, our comments below are somewhat general in nature. As the planning moves forward, we expect to offer additional and more specific input. Our comments below are totally unrelated to what we might believe would be appropriate redevelopment of other properties North and South of Harbor Square, including the remediated property South of the marsh and the Antique Mall, WSDOT, Skippers and ferry holding lanes North of Harbor Square.

ACE understands the need for redevelopment of the Harbor Square complex based on the large debt incurred by the Port to purchase the property, and what we have been told is some subsequent physical deterioration of some of the structures. We support a responsible mixed-use concept as a viable alternative redevelopment option, subject to the additional comments below.

- **Building heights and stories** (five to the South and four to the North) as reflected in the Brochure are, in our opinion, excessive. They are not consistent with one of the goals in our Articles of Incorporation: *“Preserve the low-level architecture of Edmonds, which allows minimal obstruction of views and sunlight, and preserve other amenities that make Edmonds a desirable home.”* While we believe modest height increases beyond the current 35 foot (three stories) zoning are appropriate and possibly necessary to achieve break-even redevelopment, we propose that the current heights be reduced, especially along Dayton, whether or not they substantially block existing public or private views.
- **Open space** is critical to this project – both at the ground level and in the form of step backs above the first and second floors as well as on the rooftops. The wall effect should not be allowed. Other than the esplanade and the entry way at the intersection of Dayton and SR104, there appears to be no other ground level open space, except for outdoor parking spaces (assuming the gray areas under the structures are parking facilities) depicted in the Brochure (excluding the WSDOT easement along SR104). We would like to see more emphasis on open space / gathering spaces in the master plan.

- We propose that **setbacks along Dayton be increased**, both because of existing traffic considerations and possible future expansion of easements along the only road that provides practical access to and egress from the waterfront, transit facilities and redevelopment both South and North of Dayton.
- As a public agency, we ask that the Port encourage and require **more public amenities** in this project. While we understand that the Port does not necessarily intend to be the builder, it has a great deal of influence, and we believe a responsibility, to require public amenities on property that it owns. We believe that, as a part of its responsibility to promote economic development, the Port should do more than simply act as a passive investor/developer of a generic mixed-use development: it should also promote economic development by retaining for the public more open space, maximum buffers around the marsh, and protect access to the rooftops for all visitors and residents of Edmonds. In other words, the Port should not act from the same “profit motive” that drives private owner/developers.
- We encourage the Port to include a plan that **links Harbor Square to the downtown shopping district** in the master plan, such that both districts benefit from what is ultimately built at Harbor Square.
- Our session with the Port cleared up some of the concerns ACE had about the Port vision. We believe that the same may be true of the residents who received the Brochure. We suggest that the Port would be well-served to schedule **more public sessions** before entering the formal City procedures to address citizen concerns and clear up possible misunderstandings about the Port vision and plans.

In conclusion, we again thank the Port for offering ACE the opportunity to provide our input at this stage of the process and for taking the time to attend one of our meetings to listen to the concerns of those in attendance and answer our questions. We look forward to providing ongoing input to you and City decision-makers (Planning Board and City Council) as this worthwhile project moves forward to becoming a reality. Despite our critique of the current general plan, ACE applauds the Port for soliciting not only our views, but also those of other organizations and individuals in the City. We believe that this process from beginning to end needs to fully and fairly consider the many differing views held by Edmonds residents.

THE ALLIANCE OF CITIZENS FOR EDMONDS (ACE)