

Orcas Village Planning 2007

The following is a summary of the planning process to date, next steps, and planning issues yet to be resolved to complete a plan for public review and adoption by the County. This summary is intended as both an introduction for those new to the village planning effort and a recap for those who've been involved previously.

Planning Process

- Where we've been - who did what and when and what were the results?
- Where we are now - next steps and proposed process for completion.

Planning Issues – Background

- Plan foundations - the constraints and goals for the future of the village.
- Village boundaries - pros and cons of including or excluding areas from the village.
- Allowable uses - revisit and confirm or modify uses contemplated in commercial and residential areas.
- Development standards - what should be different from countywide rules to accomplish goals for Orcas Village.

Planning Issues - To Be Discussed (See Bullet List Below)

1. Planning Process

Where we've been - who did what and when and what were the results?

Planning under the Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA) the County established exterior boundaries for rural villages and hamlets, most of them on Orcas Island. Orcas Village was classified as a village. The current outer boundaries were established in 2000 based on provisions in state law for making exceptions to the "rural or urban" choices the law allows. Interim regulations for villages and hamlets were adopted in 2000 to address land use development until area-specific plans could be developed.

In 1998 three community meetings were held by the County to develop the vision and goals for the future of Orcas Village. In 1999 a grass-roots committee of Orcas area residents hired consultants, Amanda Azous and Peter Fisher, to help survey the community on attitudes and preferences for growth in the Village, analyze the physical constraints (geology, water supply, etc.), and prepare the *Orcas Village and Ferry Landing Activity Center Plan*. That plan was submitted to the County by the committee in November 1999. The results of the 1998 meetings and the 1999 community plan proposal remain evident in the working draft plan the County produced in 2003 before its work was halted (due to competition for limited resources).

The draft plan includes a map describing a central commercial/mixed use district surrounded by a residential district and a table of allowable uses and use limitations designed to respond to identified goals and constraints. A copy of the 2003 working draft plan may be downloaded from the County's website (www.co.san-juan.wa.us/cdp/default.asp). Copies are also available at the Orcas Island Library and at the Orcas Village Store. Several other documents have been prepared to inform the public and decision makers along the way and are useful references, including:

- Activity Center Planning Preliminary Report, June 1999
- Draft and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements, Urban Growth Areas and Activity Centers, 2000

In 2004 the committee sought the County's assistance to adopt new interim regulations for Orcas Village to address concerns it found weren't adequately considered in the 2000 rules. The County's response was to ask the community to develop and submit a specific proposal for this and the committee then hired a planning consultant, Laura Arnold, to help them do this. A draft was prepared and was revised in a cooperative effort with new County staff. By the fall of 2004 the consultant was under contract with the County to assist with completing the Orcas Village Plan. The proposal for new interim rules was ultimately rejected by the County in 2005 due in part to concerns about effects on business owners and in part to ongoing struggles to provide the necessary staff resources.

Where we are now - next steps and proposed process for completion

In 2007 the County has committed to completing the Orcas Village Plan with Laura Arnold's assistance to County staff. The next steps contemplated to accomplish this are:

1. Distribution of this summary report to all property owners in the Village with copies available on the County web site (May 2007).
2. Individual meetings with business owners to confirm or revise approaches to accommodate planned development or redevelopment of properties within the scope and intent of the Orcas Village Plan (April - May 2007).
3. Community meeting(s) to review remaining planning issues, address questions and issues raised by community members, and establish items to be addressed in a new draft (May 2007).
4. Following informal community meetings, prepare a public review draft plan for:
 - a. Distribution to the general public;
 - b. Environmental review required under state law;
 - c. Legal review by the County Prosecuting Attorney's office;
 - d. Required notices to and review by governmental agencies; and
 - e. Revisions based on comments received from the agencies and the public.
5. Publicize and hold a public hearing before the County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will develop recommendations to the County Council, who will hold their own hearing prior to final adoption of a Plan (fall 2007).

2. Planning Issues - Background

Village boundaries - pros and cons of including or excluding areas from the Village. GMA makes few allowances for exceptions to the urban-or-rural rule of land classification. Orcas Village was designated under one of these, to allow for compact infill development in an established area of activity more intensive than generally found in rural areas.

Pros and Cons:

- A village designation allows for the adoption of a plan specific to Orcas Village to address land use and development choices for the future of the Village.
- Without a village designation the area will be considered as rural and only limited, low-impact uses will be allowed based on county-wide rules.

- If the boundaries are contracted, the areas excluded will not be subject to village-specific planning goals. [For example, the area from the ferry landing east to Bay Head was included partly to ensure that shoreline development would be in scale with the character of the Orcas Landing area.]

Allowable uses - revisit and confirm or modify uses contemplated in commercial and residential areas.

Based on the physical constraints of the natural and built environment in the Village, and on the results of the 1999 community survey, a set of planning principles were established to guide development of the Village plan. These are expressed in the 2003 working draft and form the basis for proposed uses in the commercial and residential districts. Overall, the proposed plan limits the residential district to residential uses (houses, home occupations, cottage enterprises) and allows for a limited range of commercial, industrial, institutional and other types of uses that support the immediate community as well as the nature of the Village as a transportation hub and gateway to the island. The range of uses is intended to avoid creating new development that generates significant vehicle traffic of its own.

Development standards - what should be different from countywide rules to accomplish goals for Orcas Village.

The development standards for the commercial district are the principal part of the plan to be completed. Guidance for these was developed in the 1999 *Orcas Village and Ferry Landing Activity Center Plan* and was used to prepare the 2003 working draft plan as well as the 2004 draft interim regulations for the Village. The overall purpose of the development standards is to limit the scale of new development to a level of impact the area can accommodate without further stress on the circulation system, water supply and other constraints. These standards will be addressed in a separate community meeting or series of meetings in the next two to three months to confirm them for consideration in public hearings to follow.

3. Planning Issues - To Be Discussed

- Should the boundaries be modified? What are the consequences?
- Are the uses listed as allowable in the commercial district appropriate? Should there be caveats for certain uses (e.g., allowing for expansion or replacement of existing lodging facilities but not new ones)? Are the types of permits required appropriate?
- Are the limitations on the residential district uses appropriate?
- Are the proposed development standards (building size, height, etc.) a good fit for the Village to maintain the character of the place and respect its visual and physical qualities? Are there provisions proposed that the community can't live with?
- How should moorage development be addressed to meet local needs while maintaining village scale and working within circulation/traffic constraints?
- How should the plan address uncertainties about future ferry terminal needs? (It's not likely that the Orcas Village Plan will be the vehicle to address all of the concerns facing the Village for the future, including resolution of ferry terminal operations and improvements, but it can be a means for the public and the County to express long-term interests for the Village to the WA State Ferries.)
- Other issues that may arise during consultation with the Orcas Village area community.