

MEMORANDUM

To: Bart Alford, Molly Harris, Shirley Schultz, Stephen Atkinson

From: Nicole Faghin, Karen Stewart, Janet Wright, Susan Jones

Date: December 18, 2007

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Subject: Thea Foss Waterway Design and Development Plan
Public Workshop #1 Notes

The following is a summary of the public feedback and comments received at the Thea Foss Plan Update Public Workshop held on November 29, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to hear comments about what the community likes and doesn't like about the current Thea Foss Plan and to provide suggestions on what they would like to see in an update of that plan. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 members of the public attended the workshop. The meeting began with a presentation on the background of planning in the Thea Foss Waterway and a description of associated planning projects currently underway that affect development along the Thea Foss.

After the presentation the group divided into four breakout groups to give feedback on the following four topic areas:

1. Design Standards and Site Development
2. Public Access, Views and Open Space
3. Parking and Circulation
4. Land Uses and Vision

Facilitators for each of the breakout sessions collected notes. In addition, the public was encouraged to write comments directly onto copies of the existing Thea Foss Waterway Plan to indicate location of specific comments. Written comments were also received from some of the attendees and email comments were sent as a follow up to the workshop. The following summary includes all of these comments received during and after the workshop.

I. Design Standards and Site Development,

Facilitated by Bart Alford, City of Tacoma and Susan Jones, atelierjones

East Side Industrial Uses vs. Public Access

- Expand Design Guidelines to East Side, especially regarding Industrial Areas and remaining Tank Farms. Safety Issues are a big concern!
- Encourage Density on Eastside as well. The “west side only” approach is too TIMID. The vision of a developed FOSS needs to be completed on the east side as well.
- Need Density to make even the West Side economically viable! Right now west side commercial areas are struggling for lack of density. But, where would the industrial uses go?
- Element of time is important. For the short term, the tank farms will probably stay. But for the long term, it is doubtful that the owners will want to or be able to, keep them up. For the future – we should be planning without the tank farms.
- Supportive of the Urban Waters building. Will set a good precedent for future development along the east side of the Foss.
- Could you convert the tank farm to holding tanks for biofuels in the future? And provide public access/ educational opportunities for them? Could be based on a Gasworks Park model/

Public Access

- Can an esplanade be located on the East Side, especially at the northern tip? Could it be designed in a way that allows the tank farms to still be viable, and for safety standards to be met?
- Should the public be allowed to access that area at all?
- Currently there is a conflict between the Tank Farm and Marina Boating.
- There are too many barriers between the water and the city. Public access is challenged. With the possibility of the 11th street bridge going away, it only increases the difficulties of easy public access.
- The 509 Bridge – does not easily accommodate pedestrians – problem.
- The 15th Street Corridor is very difficult to get down to the water. Very confusing.
- Should create visual terminuses at the end of the View Corridors to create a draw to bring more people out.

View Corridors

- Should the properties on either side be setback more?
- Don’t like the terminology of “View Corridor”. Implies no action –just passive looking. How about Public Access Corridors? This suggestion was well received by everyone in attendance.
- City should encourage more casual uses, like hot dog stands, coffee stands. Existing regulations don’t encourage these.
- Need better signage to encourage more public access. Need to emphasize the entry points to the corridors. Perhaps create arcades?
- Signage should clearly point out the connection between the city and water, and between the water and the city, especially for the boaters coming by water towards the city. They don’t know how to get to the city!

- Right now, the corridors feel too much like private alleys, used for loading docks, etc. by the property owners.
- Need to improve the Signage and encourage Paving Upgrades. Albers Mill is an example in the right direction.
- Keep buildings low for less shadowing of waterway. Buildings should be low to allow views of waterway and allow sun to hit the west shore. Sites that are too narrow to bring commerce without height should be used as green space.
- Height limit should be the roadbed of the Murray Morgan Bridge. Is that 100 feet...or less? Tops of buildings should be gardens. Public should be able to see the Bay and the Mountain from many angles.

Parking and Open Space

- Not enough parking spaces – only 20 or so public spaces down on the Foss.
- Needs to be a balance between parking spaces and Parks
- How about a public park underneath the 15th Street overpass?

Public Amenities vs. Density

- Underlying density is too dense. Maximizing the value of every parcel should not be the goal of the city. Instead, should try and maximize public amenities.
- The Simon Johnson site was badly handled, but given that the underlying zoning was much too dense, it was a good solution to a difficult problem. Liked the way the towers got more slender and higher, in exchange for more public amenities at the street level.
- Should restrict zoning on the waterway – and provide more public open space. Not enough ‘public’ stuff.
- Think people not buildings- the Foss is Tacoma’s crown jewel- do not sell it out for private profits.
- Create clear definition of “a mixed use” needed. Do we intend applicants to claim commercial office space as “water related” because they are part of a “mixed use” project? Strengthen clear definitions of what is “water related” and “water enjoyment”.

Sustainability Design Standards

- Encourage Green Roofs for all buildings on the Foss. Perfect opportunity for looking down on the roofs of the buildings from the city. Could become an identity point for Tacoma.
- Need to incentivize developers. Give them extra height? Faster permitting time? Definitely should use stormwater rebates.
- Encourage bioswales to clean and reduce runoff. Some examples include the Environmental Services Building in Tacoma, or at High Point in Seattle.
- Encourage the use of Pervious Pavement – whether asphalt or concrete. Very high strength materials now available, that eliminate the conflicts with fire truck access.

Comments drawn on the map:

- Increase wharf area for more gathering spaces (on NW area of Foss)
- Not safe to walk along bank (north of 11th Street bridge on East side))
- Site development- hub concept for retail, skip the four corners concept
- Combine the two development sites between 11th and 13th Street on the west side
- Open to pocket park at the end of 13th Street on West side
- Prioritize public benefit amenities
- Full vision for East side- mixed use, emphasize commercial activity
- Flexibility in plan to grow into vision
- Break the blocks down on West side, especially north of 19th street
- Create public access east of Pacific Avenue between 17th and 18th Street on West side
- For site just north of 18th Street on West side, place inviting welcome signs for public at each opening
- More public active space at esplanade at end of 16th and 17th Street (Dock Street marina).
- Future park NOT developed (just north of 15th Street on West side)
- Naturalize park (at SW corner of Wheeler Osgood waterway, adjacent to the Foss)

II. Public Access, Views and Open Space,

Facilitated by Shirley Schultz, City of Tacoma and Janet Wright, Reid Middleton

Views/Sunlight

- Concerns re allowed height of buildings on west side, if tall will block sunlight from esplanade. Already have limited sunlight with short winter days.
- Prefer narrower buildings on West side with open space in between to keep views & sunlight
- Promote design of bldgs that “step down” (tiered) towards the water to lessen shading & bulk.
- Think Ruston Way- Point Defiance- on a sunny weekend the public flocks to the Foss.

Public Access

- Want unobstructed esplanade from west to east side (does this mean formal esplanade like on west side, or public walkway?)
- Esplanade should be multi-modal – available for bikes, strollers, walkers, runners
- Tall buildings will affect access and width of esplanade-people may feel “squeezed” between buildings and waterway
- Make place where you don’t feel like you’re in someone’s living room” (Want esplanade to feel like a public space, not just an extension of the housing adjacent to the waterway.)
- Integrate industrial on east side with access- look for international examples of this
- Tacoma is a blue collar town- love this, and want to keep industrial component

- Harbor Island in Seattle is good example of visual access, berm and platforms located where can't get near the water due to industrial uses
- Granville island as an example-vibrant and activities, would like this for the Foss
- Connect esplanade to UWT along abandoned RR tracks
- People already "loop" the whole Foss- using informal routes along the water where possible.
- 11th Street Bridge- look to Prague/Paris for examples of festival, park, market use
- Formal esplanade with bulkhead, riprap, and concrete separates people from the water
- Access around Wheeler-Osgood is better to be walkways/boardwalk- not large expanse of concrete like esplanade due to conservation area. Esplanade design not best for all locations on Foss.
- Restore 11th Street bridge for historic value. Add elevators similar to Pike Place to access waterfront. This plan needs to allow for places to eat and enjoy that are affordable to families- as well as areas to picnic and enjoy the Foss.
- Continuous walking path with bicycle path linked to bicycle/walkways from Pierce County systems to Tacoma systems.
- Highest Priority should be public access, both physically AND visually. Esplanade, yes, and also views of bay and Mountain from the city bluff and from the 509 bridge and from I-5.

Access to Water for Boating

- Access- Want to be on or in water, not just near it
- Thea's Landing is unfriendly for water access but it's the best there is
- More access for small craft
- Need to get close down to water to launch shells- very difficult now
- Also small craft storage & ways to make it useful during daytime (e.g. lockers, showers, etc.)
- Make Foss part of Puget Sound Water Trail
- Much of Foss has steep areas adjacent to water, so capitalize where easier access to water, e.g., north and south ends
- North end of Foss is challenging for beginning boaters- they want to stay in protected waters of Foss
- Multi-level floats can be designed to accommodate motorized and nonmotorized boats
- Different types of boats need different width ramps and docks
- Access needs nearby parking- especially for small craft
- Recognize that varying uses have special needs- e.g. ramps for hand carts holding boats versus car trailers or hand-carried craft
- Involve broadest group of stakeholders in design of boating facilities
- Boating facilities vs. proposed Children's Museum- boating should get priority because is water-dependent, museum is not
- Low moorage for non-motorized boats (south end of Foss)

- "Access" means not only getting near the water but getting on the water. To get on the water in a small boat requires parking, a place to change clothes, a secure rack from which to get your boat, a float of appropriate freeboard and a ramp if you need to wheel a heavy boat.
- Public access for nonmotorized canoes, kayaks, sailing boats- partner with Port of Tacoma.

Open Space

- Would like open space park between 12th & 13th on the west side
- For Wheeler-Osgood, have narrower access with nodes of open space
- Make Wheeler-Osgood a beach area
- Open natural reserve (on south side of Wheeler Osgood waterway adjacent to Foss)
- Ballpark? (on East Side just south of 11th Street bridge)
- Parks and green areas in and under 11th Street bridge- small shops and cheap eats and open sitting areas for family fun.
- Can we set aside land on West side near 15th Street as public park- open space- rule out development or sale. We need perpetual open space there- rather than more development.

Comments drawn on the map:

- Northeast end point of Foss has great views
- Create boat ramp launch at Thea's Landing for human-powered craft
- Several large vessels: Odyssey (Sea Scout) and Curtis are currently moored on the West Side and will be moving to Youth Marine Center on east side.
- Have a trolley over the 11th Street bridge from west side to public parking on east side
- Have an Art Walk in the area adjacent to the Murray Morgan bridge on the west side
- There are views and undeveloped open space at the end of 15th St ROW on East side
- Foss Landing on east side has boat lifts- how to deal with public access on water side of this bldg? Does access have to route around bldg?
- Foss Landing said would pay for floats for new small craft launch on SE area of Foss.
- SE end of Foss good for putting in boats due to low shoreline- about 6-7ft lower than shoreline opposite it on west side
- At south end of Foss, change access to a more natural path or walkway to continue on towards east side
- Area a short distance south of Wheeler-Osgood- there is sandy access to water, but no street to this access point
- Port of Tacoma wants conservation area around Wheeler-Osgood & does not want esplanade
- Want several connections from East D street down to water along east side of Foss (the Foss area north of 11th St bridge)
- Want to restore the Murray Morgan bridge

III. Parking and Circulation,

Facilitated by Stephen Atkinson, City of Tacoma and Karen Stewart, Reid Middleton

Parking

- Generally, need more public parking down along the Foss. Parking garage at Glass Museum provides some spaces.
- Study parking and traffic impacts of condos.
- Reduce demand for parking spaces by providing bus transit (trolley) on both sides of the Foss.
- North of 11th St. impose a cap for parking.
- Urban Waters office building planned to accommodate over 100 people—only 40 parking spaces are planned. How will this use comply with City parking requirements?
- Increasing “private” parking associated with condo developments and the lack of public parking on the waterfront.
- Build parking on the East Side and provide transit across 11th Street bridge.
- There should be free public parking similar to Ruston Way- private condo will restrict public access with expensive pay to park arrangements.
- Need commitment from Pierce Transit to begin a set and regular bus along the water now so it can begin to grow. It’s not asking too much to start now.
- Parking along east side of Foss, Maybe in that dead air space above railroad tracks.

Circulation

- GOAL: Provide multiple modes of access to each area of the waterfront.
- Pedestrian ferry service to other cities, including Seattle.
- Use water taxis to facilitate crossing the waterway.
- Coordinate with Sound Transit to provide “water bus service” from the Foss to Pt. Defiance.
- Work with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit to increase transit options along the Foss.
- Provide safe pedestrian access to the proposed park on the south end of the waterway.
- Construct a park along Wheeler Osgood Waterway with pedestrian linkage across the water.
- New LeMay Auto Museum will bring additional traffic/tourists to the Foss.
- Maintain truck access for industrial uses along east side of the Foss.
- Use “F” St. as public walkway to end of peninsula to be compatible with existing industrial uses along “D” St. that would not be appropriate for adjacent pedestrian trail.
- Murray Morgan Bridge should be repair to support auto and truck traffic.
- Murray Morgan Bridge could be similar to some pedestrian bridges in Europe with artist stalls and public market (e.g., Karl’s bridge in Prague).
- Bring back the 15th St. stairs. (Why were the stairs on 15th street removed?)
- Need to improve connections with the Dome District

- Proposed shuttle or transit along “D” St.
- “D” St. north of 11th should remain industrial.
- Tram/funicular railroad to connect east and west on the north end of the Foss.
- Need more docks and public and guest moorage. Lack of water access, public moorage and boat launches on the east side.
- Lots of walking.
- Walkway and bikeway across MM Bridge and along both sides of Foss and across 509 bridge.

IV. Land Uses and Vision,

Facilitated by Molly Harris, City of Tacoma and Nicole Faghin, Reid Middleton

Vision Statement

- Interest in describing Thea Foss as a “transition zone” between downtown and port/industrial uses.
- Recommended including three broad principles of shoreline master program:
- Encourage Water Dependent Uses
- Promote Public Access
- Protect Shoreline Natural Resources
- Vision should encourage public water dependent use.
- It would be a good idea to distribute the new state guidelines to stakeholders now-our thinking needs to take those guidelines into consideration.
- Vision should be Vision, that is Visual Access to Bay and to Mountain by all taxpayers. Density should be very secondary.

Key Concepts:

- Thea Foss Waterway should serve as a transition zone between the commercial downtown area and the port and industrial users to the east of the Waterway;
- upland uses should provide for and accommodate a range of commercial mixed uses and industrial uses
 - In water uses should provide for access for both motorized and non-motorized uses
 - Public access to the shoreline should be provided wherever possible and feasible.

Land Uses

- Find more opportunities for non-motorized boating community to gain access to waterway.
- Concept of linear park along shoreline edge may be inconsistent with all anticipated uses – may apply in some areas but not others.
- Need to be creative about how to think about providing “continuous” access, particularly for walking trails
- Need to be creative about what is considered Public Access
- Mixed Use needs to be defined:

- Mixed use ok to include residential on West side of Foss and from 11th street to head of Foss
- Mixed Use Should NOT include residential from 11th street North. (general consensus from group).
- Tank Farm use over time needs to be evaluated – probably cannot be used as residential due to contamination but is important entry way to Foss Waterway.
- Look for opportunity to provide public amphitheater for outdoor concerts etc.
- Evaluate requirements for retail on first floor of structures. Regulations may be too inflexible and are creating problems for buildings. Look at alternative to allow offices or other commercial uses on ground floors.
- Urban Waters project – generally seems to be good fit and will be positive change along that section of Foss
- Concern expressed about changes that will negatively affect existing industrial type uses along east side of the Foss
- Murray Morgan Bridge may be very important component of what will occur on Foss depending upon how that issue is resolved – but issue does need to be resolved.
- Multi use by not just using waterfront for condos and high end retail. Bring arts and open spaces for mini concerts and big events like the tall ships. Encourage more non-motorized activities with walking and boating improvements. Celebrate Tacoma's rich history.

Next Steps:

The information from this workshop will be combined with other information received from City Staff and the Foss Waterway Design Review Committee to develop concepts for moving forward with updates to the Thea Foss Design and Development Plan.

Memo re: Thea Foss Design and Development Plan Update
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