

PUBLIC COMMENTS SUMMARY

Northern State Public Meeting | September 25, 2014

A community meeting was hosted by the Port of Skagit, and its partners, Skagit County and the City of Sedro-Woolley on September 25 to generate discussion about the future of Northern State. Approximately 25 people attended the meeting. Feedback from the first community meeting on June 5 was presented to confirm the general community perspectives regarding priority objectives and potential future uses of the property. Information was also presented on potential community benefits and the feasibility of uses previously recommended by the public. Community members were asked to weigh in, using green, yellow, and red dots, to indicate their support for specific uses.

Comments and key themes resulting from the community meeting are summarized below, as well as results from the two voting exercises.

Guiding Principles

The matrix below illustrates feedback received on June 5. Participants at the September 25 community meeting provided the following comments:

- Respondents at the September 25 event indicated general agreement with the responses collected at the previous community meeting regarding prioritization of guiding principles.
- Several participants commented on the balance between a strong community desire for public ownership and access with a more neutral commitment to investment of public dollars.
- Some community members commented on the fact that tax revenue can only be generated by a private entity, and that public opinion for private uses on the property were mixed.
- Multiple comments were made about the role of Job Corps and the other current tenants in providing employment opportunities and training. Some wondered how these uses could compliment additional, future uses.
- Participants voiced across the board support for preservation of historic structures.

Guiding Principles	Not Important		Neutral		Very Important	Total Votes
	1	2	3	4	5	
Creating Jobs/Employment	4	2	15	20	14	55
Creating Tax Revenue	9	8	18	6	8	49
Keeping Property in Public Ownership	3	3	4	8	34	52
Preservation of Historic Architecture	1	4	2	11	35	53
Minimize Public Investment in Property	11	7	14	7	5	44
Public Access to Facility	3	2	2	6	37	50

Above: Results from a community voting exercise conducted on June 5, 2014

Future Uses

Attendees at the September 25 community meeting reacted to findings from the June 5 community open house. Participants' opinions aligned with the following key themes:

- Respondents at the September 25 event generally concurred with the future uses recommended at the previous community meeting. Several respondents said education and specialty residential were their preferred reuse options.
- Most people agreed that, given its acreage, the property would be suitable for a mix of distinct uses.
- Opinions regarding the potential for on-site hospitality were mixed. Several individuals voiced that some private funding would be critical for the rehabilitation of historic structures, while others worried that a private use would lead to reduced public accessibility and a lack of attention to community needs. The majority of participants agreed that support for hospitality uses on the site would depend on the specifics of the use.
- Several individuals expressed interest in expanding the current uses on the property, while others wondered how the nature and restricted access of existing uses might impact the ability for redevelopment on other portions of the site. Overall, participants were in support of maintaining the existing operations, either on site or at another off-site location.
- The majority of participants agreed that commercial office or flex space would yield the least public benefit.
- Several individuals thought that an education or research campus offered the most flexibility in terms of ability to combine with other uses. People also thought that the educational campus approach would protect and encourage open, public access.
- Participants questioned and debated the financial commitment required for retrofitting existing structures for the variety of proposed uses.
- No additional uses were recommended at the September 25 community meeting.



Above: Results from a community voting exercise conducted on June 5, 2014

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Assessment of Potential Benefits

Participants at the September 25 community meeting were asked to rate reuse options by the ability of that use to produce public benefits. In most cases, community members agreed with the assessment conducted by the project partners and consultant team. Hospitality prompted the most unique responses, with 9 community members voting in support and 5 voting in opposition.

Future Use	Economic Benefits	Community Benefits	Environmental	What Do You Think?
<i>Prominent uses which may include ancillary mix of uses as well</i>				
Expanded/Leveraged Existing Uses	Supports family wage jobs and workforce training. Public ownership, so no property taxes Limited multiplier benefit	Current uses not dependent on buildings Restricted access Crime and perception concerns	Limited active stewardship of natural resources Cleanup to unrestricted standards	Green- 4 Yellow- 4 Red- 0
Education / Research Campus	Supports high paying, lucrative jobs Public ownership, so no property taxes Potential to generate additional local spending	Capitalizes on character of the campus Draws people and integrates open space and access Likely perceived as an amenity to community	Habitat restoration and research likely integrated in to programs Cleanup to unrestricted standards	Green- 14 Yellow- 0 Red- 0
Hospitality Destination	Modest pay, but high number of jobs Private ownership, property taxes + hotel taxes Significant influx of outside spending	Capitalizes on character of buildings and campus Draws people and integrates open space and access Integrates open space and access Concerns with exclusivity	Enhancement likely integrated into landscaping Cleanup to unrestricted standards	Green- 9 Yellow- 0 Red- 5
Commercial Office / Business Park	High paying, lucrative jobs Private ownership, property taxes Significant outside investment	No link to historic uses Accessible, but not a draw Concerns with traffic	Likely limited concern with stewardship of natural resources Cleanup to unrestricted standards	Green- 1 Yellow- 2 Red- 4
Specialty Residential (elderly, convalescence, veterans)	Supports family wage jobs Private ownership, property taxes Limited multiplier benefit	Potential connection to convalescent history Accessible, but not a draw Positive benefits from services	Enhancement likely integrated into programs Cleanup to unrestricted standards	Green- 8 Yellow- 1 Red- 1
Light Industrial / Flex Space	Low number, but higher payer scale Private ownership, property taxes Brings outside investment, but not likely to create a draw	No connection to historic uses Accessible, but not a draw Potential concerns with traffic and noise	Likely limited concern with stewardship of natural resources Cleanup to industrial standards	Green- 0 Yellow- 2 Red- 5

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Assessment of Feasibility

Participants at the September 25 community meeting were asked to rate the feasibility of proposed reuse options. Public opinions generally aligned with findings from the feasibility assessment conducted by the Port of Skagit and its partners. However, the community opinion was slightly more favorable towards the potential for an education or research campus and for the expansion of existing uses. The community perspective was also more polarized regarding the concept of a hospitality destination, reflecting earlier comments that support for hospitality was dependent on the specifics of that use.

Future Use	Feasibility Considerations					
	Alignment with Local Government Goals	Business Risk to Implementing Agency	Financial Feasibility	Location	Compatibility with Historic Architecture	What Do You Think?
Expanded Baseline – Increase scale of existing uses	Limited private investment and public access	Limited revenue potential to balance maintenance costs	Tenants require subsidized lease rates Revenues do not cover maintenance costs	Benefits of seclusion	Does not capitalize on buildings value	Green- 4 Yellow- 1 Red- 0
Education / Research Campus (all sectors)	Strong alignment	Risk of attracting institution	Likely depends on state funding	Assuming tailored to assets of the site	Campus character central to use	Green- 14 Yellow- 0 Red- 0
Hospitality Destination	Strong alignment	Risk of attracting investment and perception	Potential to generate significant private investment and revenue	Assuming tailored to assets of the site	Campus character central to use	Green- 9 Yellow- 0 Red- 5
Commercial Office / Business Park	Strong alignment	Risk of recruiting and retaining tenants	Limited demand and challenging location Rents not likely to cover renovation and deferred maintenance	Distance from population center	Not dependent on historic character	Green- 1 Yellow- 2 Red- 5
Specialty Residential	Strong alignment	Risk of attracting investment	Growing demand for senior and health services, Potential to generate private investment and revenue	Assuming tailored to assets of the site	Campus character central to use	Green- 8 Yellow- 1 Red- 1
Light Industrial / Flex Space	Limited	Risk of recruiting and retaining tenants	Limited demand and challenging location Revenues not likely to generate sufficient revenue	Distance from population and freeway	Limited	Green- 0 Yellow- 2 Red- 5