

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY AND THE BELLINGHAM WATERFRONT

Initial Campus Planning Process

Late in 2002 the City and Port of Bellingham began studying the potential of redeveloping Bellingham's waterfront by forming the Waterfront Futures Group. During the March 18, 2004 Board of Trustees meeting, then President Karen Morse distributed a document developed by the group that introduced the proposal for an off-campus site of Western Washington University. Later that spring, an Academic Waterfront Planning Committee was appointed to discuss whether and how WWU might participate in the proposed development on the waterfront.

The committee began by drafting principles to guide campus discussion. During fall quarter 2004, the committee solicited reactions to the principles and ideas for possible waterfront projects, and held forums encourage and inform input. Brief pre-proposals were solicited by the committee to gain a better idea of the range of programs or functions that might be pursued, with an initial submission deadline of April 15, 2005. These were brief conceptual proposals, consistent with the Guiding Principles that were established for the discussions.

Twenty five pre-proposals were submitted. These proposals were received from individuals, groups, departments, colleges, and interdisciplinary groups for programs and projects that might feasibly be located on the waterfront. Two forums in May 2005 provided an opportunity for public review and discussion of the pre-proposals. In 2006 Western confirmed the waterfront as a location for possible expansion in its 2006 Strategic Action Plan.

On August 8, 2008 Western's Board of Trustees approved the development of an Inter-local Cooperation Agreement between WWU and the Port of Bellingham that allows for the creation of a "development entity." Following Western's August 8 meeting, Commissioners from the Port of Bellingham unanimously approved the creation of the Viking Development Entity at their August 19 meeting. When the development entity was officially created as a not-for-profit corporation in 2009, its name was changed to Western Crossing.

A little under one year later a draft Character Study Report, which was produced by a consultant, was presented to WWU's Board of Trustees at their June 12, 2009 meeting.

In early 2009 a smaller waterfront planning group was created out of the larger Academic Waterfront Committee. This group's goal has been to approach the project in phases with a narrowed academic programming focus. A White Paper was written to provide a base planning document for Western programmatic vision for its waterfront development. The White Paper continues to be a work in progress as programmatic decisions are made regarding the waterfront.