

Strategic planning - focus group results

A series of 20 focus group sessions were conducted over a 4 day period involving 96 representatives of commercial hospital, young adult, service clubs, environmental, parks and recreation, waterfront, performing and fine arts, transportation, government, economic development, downtown, seniors, individuals-at-large, and highway 99.

Focus group participants were identified and recruited by the Strategic Planning Committee composed of City Council, Planning Board, and the Economic Development Committee - though the public was also advised and free to request to participate on subjects of particular interest.

Participants shared concerns, hopes, issues and visions for Edmonds during the hour to hour and a half long sessions including follow up questions asked by the consultant team seeking additional clarification. Following is a brief summary of the results.

General themes

The following general themes were identified as a result of discussions in all 20 focus groups.

- Downtown Edmonds is unique and needs to be preserved and protected.
- The waterfront is important and needs to be better utilized especially:
 - Old Safeway (Antique Mall) site,
 - Harbor Square,
 - Senior Center, and
 - Public parks and landings (with better public access).
- The question of building heights in downtown and the waterfront is controversial and seems to be a never ending and unresolved issue.
- Waterfront and mountain views are important and need to be preserved through public corridors and for private residential developments.
- Westgate and Highway 99 have significant economic potential and should be increased in density and infill development.
- Public decision making appears to be dysfunctional resulting in fragmented policies and programs, especially fiscal.

- City approval, permitting and inspection process is considered to be flawed as a result of outmoded or inappropriate policies and application procedures.
- Current levels of park upkeep are adequate but future parks and recreation facilities need attention particularly:
 - Civic Field reuse and ownership,
 - Yost Pool renovations including options for an indoor pool, and
 - citywide and waterfront trail and walkway network development.
- The arts community is important to the Edmonds "brand" and should be valued and better promoted.
- Capital improvement funds for city transportation need to be address immediately, especially the maintenance of city street pavements.

Service Clubs

- Edmonds positives include the mix of buildings, history, physical setting, views, homey, year round activity, and safety. The "bowl" is the real draw of the community and needs to be preserved.
- Edmonds negatives include the lack of downtown parking. Firdale is under appreciated.
- The downtown includes many absentee landowners who are no longer intimately involved or interested in Edmonds affairs.
- The city needs to get more local developers interested in developing or redeveloping underutilized properties and buildings.
- Edmonds should promote locally owned businesses rather than pursue chain stores or franchised businesses.
- Subareas like Westgate, Firdale, Harbour Square, etc, should develop into specialized areas that market specific types of uses and activities.
- New development projects should be designed and developed to fit the needs of the community.
- Service clubs and organizations have a long history in Edmonds, and were originally created

to serve particularly needs or interests. As a consequence, most are not especially connected with each other or city government.

Young Adult Sponsoring Organizations

- Edmonds community strengths are considered to be its small town features, educated population, and older age group households.
- On the other hand, Edmonds has little night life, little diversity, and lacks clear municipal leadership - attributes which do not attract young adult households or professionals.
- Washington State Ferry traffic is not effectively tapped for business or integrated into the community - creates waterfront and downtown barriers.
- WSDOT should consider creating a different ferry parking scheme rather than using SR-104 that would allow tourist riders to park and walk into downtown or the waterfront.
- Library space is limited and dedicated - library staff would program more youth and young adult activities if they had the space available.
- A wayfinding signage system is needed to provide directions to major city attractions and destinations for tourist and out-of-town visitors.
- The waterfront is not effectively utilized for or by the public - and needs to be reconfigured and reprogrammed for shoreline activities.
- The Senior Center building has serious structural and settling problems that should be resolved and/or the center should be moved to a different location.

Seniors

- Edmonds Senior Center was originally part of Snohomish County's countywide senior facility and outreach program but has evolved into its own separately operating organization. The Center serves more than senior or elderly age groups and in recent years has begun evolving into a full community center providing programs for all age and income groups.
- The Center's current building provides visual and physical access to the waterfront that is unique to Edmonds making the site special to its users. Though the building is in poor condition with structural and settling problems,

it would be a shame to lose the waterfront location and appeal.

- The Center retail store operation sells used clothing, housewares, furniture, and other donated items to help finance programs and operations. The store is popular with seniors, but also with residents in general and could use more sales and storage space.
- The building is used during the day for senior oriented programs and activities but rented in the off-hours for a variety of activities, particularly weddings given its waterfront location and access.
- Emergency access over the railroad tracks is an issue particularly with the increase in train traffic by Sound Transit, AmTrak, and the forecasted coal trains as well as continued increase in ferry traffic and loading times. If the Center is to remain on the waterfront, some form of emergency as well as convenient access needs to be developed across the railroad tracks.
- Conversely, were the Center to be relocated, it could possibly be housed in a redevelopment of the Safeway/Antique Mall where it would remain centrally and conveniently located in the bowl area possibly retaining some form of overhead crossing of the railroad track to access the current waterfront site as a public beach.

Individuals-at-large

- The community is very concerned about the way Council makes and does not make decisions - particularly about short range fiscal issues and long range economic development and sustainability. The problem may not be limited to how Council operates, but more broadly to the way the city in total has fragmented about key issues and strategies prior to the initiation of this strategic planning process.
- Edmonds has attracted and continues to attract, primarily in the "bowl" area, older working and retired households without children. Families continue to be attracted to the affordable areas of the "bowl", to the upland neighborhoods without views, and to the Highway 99 corridor, especially emigrant and young adult households. Edmonds needs to attract a diverse age, income, and cultural population to be sustainable.
- Even so, older and retired households are a source of volunteers, experienced mentors, and

financial investment potential that should be more effectively utilized.

- Edmonds' waterfront setting, views, compact downtown needs to be preserved and enhanced. Residents, particularly newcomers, don't want Edmonds to become Kirkland where new 5-story mixed use developments block the views of the downtown and waterfront. The city should take a more proactive approach, identifying public and private view corridors and instituting design overlays or other measures to preserve and enhance viewscapes.
- The proposed redevelopment of Robin Hoods Lanes for a single story, single use Bartells is entirely inappropriate to what the Westgate plan aimed to achieve. Mixed use zoning regulations should require developments to be mixed use.
- Safeway/Antique Mall site redevelopment potentials need to be realized - the current use and structure is a drag on the city's image and brand. The site could be turned into a Granville Island, Vancouver, BC public market type of development with open vendor stalls as well as a permanent indoor farm and artist market. The Granville site includes a mix of restaurants, arts supply stores, retail shops, a hotel, and a community center. Likewise, the Safeway/Antique Mall redevelopment needs a public function like a community center, park, and possibly even an amphitheater with a direct connection over the railroad tracks to the waterfront
- The city needs to take a proactive not reactive approach to the Safeway/Antique Mall redevelopment directly involving the community in the process of deciding what is included, how it is designed, and who and how it is developed and funded.
- The Highway 99 corridor is significantly underutilized and is the last major location for higher density development with retail and employment opportunities in the city. It should also contain higher density and affordable housing for young adult and workforce households provided transit services to regional as well as Edmonds destinations.
- Edmonds has number of significant organizations that have been active in the city for very long times. Most were started to accomplish a specific purpose or interest. They do not appear to be well coordinated, however, and some may have become a bit stodgy or too satisfied with the status quo to be effective.

They need to reinvent themselves and participate in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Environmental Groups

- Environmental awareness is fractured and unclear in Edmonds due partly to lack of interest and education.
- More coordination is needed in the area of transportation planning - particularly for enhancing rail and rubber-tire transit and bicycle commuting.
- Edmonds is not really a walkable community - there are not enough on and off-road trails and paths, and too many fragmented and underdeveloped sidewalks.
- Edmonds should promote more home gardening and the Farmer's Market. It should also organize a fruit tree gleaming program and promote street trees - perhaps fruit trees.
- Critical Areas Ordinance is not routinely enforced unless complaints filed.
- A demonstration rain garden, bio-swale, and other green stormwater drainage project should be developed in the city.
- A demonstration garden of native and drought resistant plants should be built possibly near the fish hatchery on Edmonds Marsh.
- Difficult to communicate environmental issues with the community at large - there is not communitywide forum on environmental issues.
- An Environmental Coordinator position should be added to Parks to increase outdoor education and programs.
- A Volunteer/Grants Coordinator should also be added to city staff somehow to assist with public and nonprofit grant applications.
- Wildlife and greenway corridors should be established and enhanced to link natural areas, parks, trails, and community facilities.
- Edmonds Marsh should be preserved and enhanced with native plant restorations, creek openings, trail networks, and interpretive signage and programs.

Parks and Recreation

- Edmonds has a great parks system which is generally well maintained. However, the city lacks an overall sustainable financial strategy for developing, operating, and maintain the system. The city has focused on the acquisition of small parks and projects in recent years as a consequence.
- Yost Pool's outdoor facility needs to be repaired and the facility expanded to include a year-round indoor pool with leisure and recreational elements. Parks has completed numerous studies for the pool and other facilities but has never followed up with any financing proposal including any bond or levy referendums.
- Civic Field, which is leased from the Edmonds School District for \$1 a year, should be acquired from the School District and improved to competitive game quality. Otherwise, the school district could potentially decide the sell the property to a private developer as a means of raising funds for school applications. The storage areas under the stadium are leased and create some annual revenue.

Woodway High School field, which is currently used by city, is located on federal land (former missal control site) and managed by the school district. Like Civic Field, the site should be acquired and developed for a public park by Edmonds.

- Edmonds has some valuable but aging facilities including Anderson Center, Boys & Girls Club, and Senior Center which need extensive upgrades but which have not been provided funding.
- More athletic fields and courts should be developed in the city to competitive play quality to support league activities and promote sports tourism.
- The flower basket program, which was started by a city employee then transferred to private sponsors, provides a quality amenity and city image which must be maintained.
- More community meeting places should be made available from a variety of public, nonprofit, and private operators or developed in the city.

- Public bathrooms should be developed to serve downtown customers and users.
- The shoreline is underutilized and inaccessible due to railroad and ferry traffic. An access system, possibly involving overhead crossing, must be developed to link the waterfront with the rest of the downtown and city.
- The Safeway/Antique Mall site should be redeveloped possibly including a public gathering and open space.
- A better, dedicated dog park facility should be developed in the city to serve resident interests. The existing off-leash area on the waterfront conflicts with the sanctuary and creates a dog waste problem. A proposed dog park facility should be a social dog park with dedicated and fenced play areas and trails.
- On and off-road biking routes and use should be promoted for commuting and recreational purposes.
- Covered outdoor sport courts including potelko and bocce ball, should be developed at Francis Anderson Center in the city for resident and sports tourism.

Arts - Performing

- Parking is a major problem for the Edmonds Center for the Arts (ECA). A parking garage is a major, but unfunded, component of the ECA strategic and long range plan.
- Existing on-street parking coupled with poor sidewalks is a problem for ECA attendees, particularly during evening and bad weather events.
- ECA is about to begin a strategic planning process to resolve future uses of the remaining school facilities, including the gymnasium, the parking garage, and other unfunded capital and operating expense requirements. Past funding by city bonds paid by sales tax which has fallen off during recession. Current options include naming rights, tax levy as a Public Facilities District (PFD), refinancing the bond, and donations (which have been high from residents).
- Francis Anderson Center is a great community asset providing space for art education and workshops, dance and music instruction and performances, and other

cultural uses. However, Anderson is aging and will need to be upgraded.

- Varied and viable community theaters operate in Edmonds including music, plays, and even cinema. For example, Olympia Ballet Theatre and school which performs at ECA, Everett, and in schools - is 30 years old, has 120 students. Most shows are sold out with 600-700 seats. Other performers include Driftwood Theatre that performs in Wade James Theater - 250 seats, and the Phoenix Theater with 100 seats. However, events and resources could be better coordinated between the various organizations including joint promotion.
- The 4th Avenue Cultural Corridor project was envisioned to preserve some Edmonds historical residential structures; provide a central artist and gallery focal point; and enhance the linkage between ECA and the downtown. Schematic designs have been completed for the project but construction funds have not been identified.
- The Safeway/Antique Mall site would work well as an artist live/work project providing affordable space for new artists and a destination activity for the waterfront and downtown.
- A writer's studio needs to be established in Edmonds to augment literary interests and potential similar to Hugo House in Seattle.

Arts - Visual

- Edmonds' visual arts community is very large and important to the city's brand and reputation. Most artists located in the city when it was still a sleepy waterfront community with great views, cheap housing, and studios. Housing and studio costs, however, have increased considerably since then where young and emerging artists cannot afford to locate in the city.
- Edmonds has a number of privately owned and operated art galleries but needs a central public or nonprofit fine arts gallery with which to showcase emerging artists work as well as visiting exhibitions.
- Edmonds could use an affordable artist live/work project similar to what Artspace, a nonprofit developer of artists housing, has developed recently in Seattle and Everett. The Safeway/Antique Mall site could be a possible location combining artist live/work with sales galleries, classrooms and instruction

workshops, a public market, and other destination activities.

- There are a number of visual artist organizations and informal artist groups that are active in the community - some for a very long time. (The Sculptors Workshop is 45 years old; the Pottery Studio has 40 members.) The Edmonds Arts Festival, Arts Walk, Francis Anderson Center arts workshops, school district programs, and other outreach and educational activities are a result of these involvement and support, along with the city's decision to fund an Arts Coordinator on city staff and an Arts Commission which is 35 years old.
- Even so, the arts community could benefit from organizing a central clearinghouse to coordinate events scheduling and promotions.
- Edmonds would benefit from a coordinated marketing effort to determine where art patrons, customers, and even other artists live, obtain information about Edmonds events, visit the city, and where and how they spend money in local stores and enterprises. The arts are an important economic development strategy but the city currently lacks the marketing data with which to determine and enhance its applications or potentials. Store and business owners appreciate and approve of the city's brand as an arts community, but see no direct benefit in their sales or other business activity from it.
- Based on the results of the market analysis, the arts community could benefit from a coordinated arts promotion program coordinating social media outreach as well as traditional print media campaigns and costs.

- Edmonds would benefit from a gateway and wayfinding signage system that directs out-of-area residents and tourists to city destinations including theaters, galleries, downtown, waterfront, and other attractions. The gateway/wayfinding signage and improvements should be very graphic and artsy and uniquely appropriate to the Edmonds branding.

Transportation

- City transportation funding, particularly for street and pavement maintenance, is in an emergency state and will reach a critical point where the pavement cannot be preserved.
- There are no capital funds available or set aside to improve SR-104 or Highway 99 or other arterial roadway traffic management needs.

- There are no funds available or identified to repair, replace, or complete sidewalk developments in the downtown, along major arterials, or for school walking routes.
- A Safe Routes to School program needs to be initiated and funded to identify and designate walking and biking routes to city schools. Edmonds Bicycle Club initiated bike instruction in the schools and has money to acquire bikes. Should know whether state and federal sources can fund the Bikes to School program by the end of 2012. Key bike commuter routes at the present time include Edmonds Way, Marine Drive, and Woodway.
- Sound Transit will require a larger layover and transfer space in the downtown/waterfront area in the near future if heavy rail transit is to realize higher rider volumes between Edmonds and Seattle. Heavy rail transit is currently not meeting rider potential due to the low number and day-only schedules possible with existing funds.
- Light rail corridor development has been recently decided and will locate the proposed north route from Seattle along I-5 by year 2023 rather than Highway 99. Densities along Highway 99 are too low, even with maximum capacity build out to support a light rail corridor.
- Community Transit (CT) operates Swift Route on Highway 99 from Everett south to Aurora Village, where it transfers to Metro and an expedited service to downtown Seattle. Due to budget problems (20% of all revenue is from rider fares), CT will soon reduce schedules on this express service route. CT does not envision extending Swift to the bowl or waterfront, or of operating a downtown shuttle route due to low rider volume projections for these routes.
- Washington State Ferries does not have funds available to improve the existing landing terminal, railroad crossing, or for parking or holding area enhancements. WSDOT acquired the proposed new ferry terminal site adjacent to Point Edwards to accommodate a 2 ferry terminal with an overcrossing of the railroad track but lacks the long range funds with which to implement development.
- The Edmonds ferry has second highest ridership in the state system and is expected to continue to increase rider volume for commuting and tourist use. Vehicular emissions are a current problem, particularly due to the in-lane, on-road ferry holding pattern on SR-104.

- A Transportation Benefit District (TBD) has been identified that would involve 7 surrounding cities. The TBD would provide funds for the above but will require Council and voter approval. The TBD could adopt an optional license fee up to \$100, a 10%-20% sales tax addition, and/or a 1% property tax addition to be used for maintenance and construction.
- In the meantime, Edmonds is dependent on General Fund sales and property tax allocations, a \$1,049 dwelling unit transportation impact fee, and whatever portion of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) is available which is not shared with Parks or for other city facilities.
- Edmonds current transportation requirements include \$2,500,000 per year which should be expensed for maintenance to preserve pavement of the existing street system, and \$60,000,000 in backlogged capital development requirements for roads, bikeways, and sidewalks.
- The controversy about the 5 Corners Roundabout is affecting public support and funds for other projects.
- Heavy rail train traffic is increasing to about 34 trains a day including Sound Transit, AmTrak, and BNSF freight. Volumes could increase even more due to proposed coal terminal in Blaine that could add around 30 more trains per day. Waterfront access by car and pedestrian, and ferry loading have and will be affected as is noise impact. The coal train EIS process does not presently include impacts beyond Blaine or Whatcom County - an issue Edmonds should join with to see about train impacts and possible local mitigations.

Economic Development

- The fiber optics service located in SR-104 to the waterfront and downtown area should be used as an economic development tool to attract businesses oriented to internet service.
- The Burlington Coat Factory building on Highway 99 is one of the few large and highly visible sites that should be packaged for more intense employment and retail related development. Possible tenant prospects could include Costco, Ikea, or Uwajimaya.
- Edmonds economic development outreach strategies should be more focused on retaining and expanding existing businesses than on trying to attract new enterprises.

- City Council does not appear to be really interested or committed to promoting economic development given recent decisions concerning the future of the Economic Development Committee and recent project development proposal rejections.
- Permitting and approvals very hard to get in Edmonds giving the city a negative image and reputation with reputable, regional developers and businesses.
- The redevelopment of Harbor Square into a more intense mixed use development with office, retail, and affordable housing should be a city economic development priority.
- Affordable or workforce housing should be a priority at Harbour Square, on Highway 99, and in other mixed use centers in Edmonds if the city is to attract and retain young adult households that will provide much of the future workforce the city needs to sustain its education, health, retail, and professional industries.
- The Safeway/Antique Mall site casts a negative image on the city and waterfront and must be effectively redeveloped for a more appropriate and effective development if the city is to effectively market the remaining waterfront and downtown.
- The existing Senior Center building is structurally unsound and settling and the building should be demolished and the activity should be moved to a more appropriate location.
- The acquisition and enhancement of Civic Field should be pursued to create sports tourism opportunities.
- While there are a number of organizations involved in Edmonds economic development activities such as the city, Port, Chamber, DMA, and the like, their programs and outreach activities do not appear to be coordinated or effective on their own.
- Edmonds residents and Council too often consider economic development to be solely the city staff's responsibility when to be effective, it must involve every organization within the city including the Port, Chamber, School District, EdCC, Hospital, etc.

Waterfront

- Building height limits are the limiting factor on the waterfront, particularly for Harbour Square. Port does not consider it feasible to redevelop the property with less than 5 story buildings. Ports proposed development would be for 30-10-10 year lease options with some ground floor retail as well as other people-friendly uses, and between 900-1200 dwelling units. The proposal is based on a detailed feasibility analysis by LMN/Berk Associates.
- Harbour Square and Safeway/Antique Mall need to be redeveloped to create destination activities and uses that draw residents and tourists to the sites and rest of town.
- Edmonds should take advantage of the pending foreclosure of Safeway/Antique Mall to institute redevelopment with or without private involvement. The city should assume a proactive rather than a reactive strategy for the site.
- Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) is a major player on waterfront development that typically gets involved after the fact or when project approvals are submitted. DOE is primarily concerned with setbacks from the shoreline that preserve native habitat.
- The Port and City need to move forward together to identify a common vision and program to redevelop Harbour Square and Safeway/Antique Mall.
- Best Western Harbour Square was developed in 1983 with an addition in 2000. Hotel has an 8 month season due primarily to leisure visitor travel. Occupancy rates are declining - waterfront needs a destination use to draw travelers. Downtown and arts events should try to package "come-and-stay" packages to see if this would boost occupancy.
- The Edmonds Yacht Club was developed in the 1950s - the original building currently houses Anthony's Restaurant. The club lost members, and then the building to Anthony's. The club has since reactivated and developed the current building that is on a 30-15-15 year lease agreement with the Port. The club derives some revenue from club rentals for parties and weddings. An issue with the city during building development was the desire to raise the lighthouse element of the new building 5 feet above height limit for prominence - which city

denied. Under the Port's lease agreement, the club must continually occupy over 50% of the building to avoid creating a mixed use structure.

- Other than Port and city properties, there are only 4 private properties located west of the railroad tracks along the shoreline - including a couple private office buildings and condos subject to a maximum height limit of 30 feet.
- Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) controls all development within 200 feet of the high tide mark along the shorelines in addition to the regulations contained within each city's Shoreline Management Act (SMA). DOE concerns include environmental issues, water dependent uses, and public access - and a maximum height of all structures of 35 feet. DOE reviews occur during final design rather than during project applications for city and other local approvals, creating an extended review and application process that hinders shoreline development projects.
- Edmonds needs to develop a comprehensive waterfront development strategy that would include the Port, WSDOT, DOE, private property owners, and the public. The last concept was developed in 2005. If publicly owned park uses are proposed to be increased raises question of how to finance acquisition and development as well as maintenance.

Downtown

- Edmonds is not perceived to be a business friendly city - permits and project approvals take long lead times and decisions are frequently turned over between the Architectural Design Board (ADB -a quasi-legal role similar to a Hearing Examiner), Planning Commission, and City Council.
- Farmer's Market is a very important community activity but generates very little sales for retailers in the downtown. Customers use downtown parking spaces to frequent the market and often have their hands too full with market merchandise to also shop other downtown stores or businesses.
- Downtown properties are a little dowdy and outdated and could use a façade improvement program with public grants and/or low-cost bank loans to make signage, awning, paint, and other superficial but necessary enhancements - particularly new business startups.
- The National Trust for Historical Preservation's 4-Point Main Street program that

emphasizes promotion, marketing, design, and organization has merit and should be investigated for application to the downtown by the Downtown Merchants Association (DMA), Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) organization, and city Economic Development Department.

- The proposed Point Wells high density residential development in Woodway will favorably impact downtown restaurants, stores, and other businesses by creating more potential customers within a short commuting distance.
- Edmonds small town downtown characteristics should be preserved even though the downtown would benefit from more residential development within its walkable customer and resident boundaries.
- Key downtown properties are owned by a small number of original long time resident families, a number of whose heirs no longer live in the city or participate in city organizations.
- While some key vacant properties are listed with brokers with regional multi-list contacts, most are listed by the individual owners with no central or visible networking accessible to out-of-town interested businesses.
- Current mixed use zoning regulations require retail to be located on all ground floors throughout the mixed use zoning district. There is not enough demand to fill this much space nor is it appropriate to locate more retail space on side rather than key street corridors. The mixed use zoning requirements should be revised to specify important retail corridors and allow ground floor residential and other appropriate people-oriented activity that does not dilute retail potential or adversely inhibit mixed use development opportunities.
- Height limits were recently increased from 30 to 35 feet in the downtown area to allow ground floor retail to effectively front onto sidewalks without being recessed below the pedestrian sight line. Any additional increase in height may limit sight lines of uphill properties.
- Edmonds has not effectively inventoried visual sight lines or public view corridors within the "bowl" or along the waterfront causing continued confusion about what impacts higher density developments could have on current or potential views and how best to protect them.

Business Districts – Perrinville, Westgate

- Westgate is not a pedestrian friendly area – the streets are too wide and the crossing times to long and dangerous, especially SR-104.
- Recent new property developments (Walgreens, Key Bank) are single use, single story constructions which do not provide the mixed use opportunities envisioned in recent plans. Mixed use zoning should require developments to be mixed use.
- Existing transit service is limited, and likely to be further reduced, and does not meet the needs of Westgate employees – particularly those that work early and late hours at PCC (30% of PCC employees ride buses).
- Edmonds land use and building permitting process is very slow and unpredictable at the department and City Council.
- Current city policies place too much emphasis on the “bowl” and not on the rest of the city including Westgate and Highway 99 in particular.
- The University of Washington student plan had some good ideas but was generally reviewed as being slightly unrealistic economically.
- Perrinville has very limited opportunities for redevelopment and was adversely affected by the city’s failure to annex the entire commercial area.

Hospital/Medical Community

- Swedish (which recently combined with Providence) has a 30-year lease of the property and buildings from the Stevens Hospital District which extends north to 148th and south to King County, and east to I-5. The Stevens Hospital District submits levies for operating expenses and can bond on its junior taxing district property tax revenues for facility development.
- Swedish captures about 20% of the local hospital service market sharing with Evergreen, Providence NW, and Everett. Swedish will open a new cancer center to serve the surrounding area and expand its services north. Swedish is one of the few hospitals in the area that takes Medicare and serves a large percent of the local Hispanic and Korean populations.

- Hospitals and medical services are evolving such that most service, staff, and equipment growth will occur within the hospital building and campus proper rather than in separate outlying building developments. Future building developments will likely occur in the neighborhoods providing preventative rather than emergency care services.
- Hospital expansion could be problematic requiring additional parking and expanded stormwater retention.
- The hospital district’s master plan is old and not public but allows 9 story buildings. Swedish needs to develop a new master plan and possibly an EIS that reflects its objectives and addresses some of the property’s development issues – including relationship with adjacent non-medical land uses, a presence on Highway 99, parking, and stormwater management.
- Swedish sponsors the arts in their public spaces and has acquisition and display programs in other facilities.
- Swedish considers Edmonds cooperation has been good. Positive attributes include the downtown, schools, waterfront, and parks – negative attributes include Highway 99 development and appearances, and the city’s fiscal weakness.

Highway 99

- Purpose of Aurora/Highway 99 is to move traffic through the city and to access commercial businesses along the corridor – particularly car dealers, equipment rentals, and other long established enterprises. Beautification efforts should not hinder business development efforts or a requirement for ingress and egress. The Shoreline project took too long with too many disruptions.
- Shoreline, Everett, Tukwila, Des Moines, and Federal Way have all improved Highway 99 traffic channelization, transit services, pedestrian enhancements, gateway and wayfinding signage in order to better manage vehicular traffic, appearances, and related economic development opportunities using a combination of federal, state, and local funds. Edmonds has not initiated a similar effort and risks presenting a passed-over image and economic development opportunities if it does not act while funds are still available from state and federal sources.

- Zoning and signage regulations on Highway 99 were designed for the “bowl” area and do not reflect the business character or development potential of the corridor. A subarea plan should be developed for the corridor that directly involves corridor property owners and businesses and creates appropriate implementing zoning and design standards.
- The recent grant to develop unique gateway standards for the International District will be a valuable addition to the corridor, particularly in identifying the boundaries of the district. However, the city should also establish gateways to mark entry into the city in general on Aurora as the public perception now is that it is Lynnwood.
- The cluster of Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and other Asian businesses is unique to Edmonds - and becoming one of the larger concentrations along Aurora. Customers come from a very wide market area, including Bellevue, to buy imported goods and eat in the restaurants. Emigrant families are also settling in the surrounding neighborhoods as a result of the business concentration.
- The International District designation is important but should not be limited to physical improvements only. The Main Street 4-Point program involving marketing, promotion, and organization as well as design could be a useful model. Local Highway 99-grown organizations should be developed to implement a more comprehensive approach. Such groups may or may not be formally incorporated into existing Edmonds organizations depending on their interests and membership.
- Swedish Hospital will be a significant presence on Highway 99 particularly if it develops new entrances and buildings on the hospital campus. Swedish, the city, and the rest of Highway 99 property and business owners need to jointly participate in or be aware of hospital needs and master planning efforts.

Developers

- Edmonds has a reputation among area and regional developers for being difficult and unpredictable to develop projects in. This has likely affected the type of developers and projects the city has or has not been able to attract.
- The current development process involves separate reviews by the Design Board, Planning Commission, and City Council - any one of

which can disapprove what the others have reviewed - particularly City Council. The process needs to be streamlined and possibly with concurrent reviews; the requirements made more predictable including possible use of form-based examples; and transparent.

- The city should assume a more proactive approach to Harbour Square, Safeway/Antique Mall, and Highway 99 by resolving with the public, staff, and officials; as well as property owners and developers exactly what is desired and will be approved if the city is to attract quality and timely development and salvage its reputation.

Governance

- Edmonds does not have a transparent public governance process that effectively engages residents and therefore **cannot** establish long range policies and projects.
- A couple of civic oriented watchdog groups monitor civic affairs and decisions posting their comments and suggestions on their own blog sites. There is, however, no public social media counterpart sponsored by the city where an average citizen may view or comment on current city activities or proposals.