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**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH  
SOUTH WHIDBEY RESIDENTS:  
PLANNING THE NEW BAYVIEW CENTER DEVELOPMENT**

**Conducted August 9, 2007**

**Prepared for**

**Goosefoot  
PO Box 114  
Langley, WA 98260**

**by**

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**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH  
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**INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

Goosefoot, a non-profit corporation located in Langley, WA, purchased nine acres of commercially zoned property at the southeast corner of SR 525 and Bayview. The organization plans to redevelop this property into a mixed-use development that will include retail, professional and other business space, as well as residential. In keeping with its business model and philosophy, Goosefoot intends to create a development that will blend in with South Whidbey while responding to needs identified by local residents.

As an initial step in gathering information from the public, two public meetings were conducted with citizens. To gather additional information, a focus group discussion was conducted with randomly selected residents of the four major communities on South Whidbey. The discussion was held at the Langley offices of Goosefoot on Thursday evening, August 9, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. The 11 participants were recruited from a purchased listing of about 3,500 households on South Whidbey. Names were selected randomly. People were screened to be residents on the Island at least nine months a year. Those selected for the discussion included about the same proportion of residents from Clinton, Langley, Freeland and Greenbank and were a range of ages. There was also an intention to have the group equally divided between male and female heads of households.

Facilitation of the discussion and preparation of this report were done by Carolyn Browne Tamler.

**PARTICIPANTS**

The discussion participants included six women and five men, all of whom are full-time residents of South Whidbey. The range of years they have resided on the Island is from two years to over 30 years. They represent all of the communities of South Whidbey including Langley (2), Clinton (4), Freeland (3) and Greenbank (2).

<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Years in Community</u>
Barbara	Freeland	35 – 54	34
Joann	Langley	35 – 54	28
Dave	Freeland	35 - 54	30
Lisa	Greenbank	35 – 54	10
Craig	Clinton	55 and older	11
Lisa	Greenbank	35 – 54	7
Larry	Clinton	35 – 54	29
Gordon	Freeland	35 – 54	18
Sande	Clinton	55 and older	3
Kathleen	Clinton	35 – 54	2

## **COMMON THEMES**

There was strong consensus that the Bayview Center Development needs to fit the character and personality of South Whidbey and it should provide a gathering place for the community. It is in a great location to provide services for tourists, as well.

Major themes arising from the discussion:

- 1 While the Goosefoot name is known, most people have little idea of what the organization does.
- 2 While people note a lack of stores providing large selections and low prices, like the big box retailers on the mainland, they are strongly and unanimously opposed to any of the chain retailers coming to South Whidbey. They are willing to travel across the water rather than have a business come into the community that doesn't fit the South Whidbey aesthetic.
- 3 The most frequently mentioned retail destination for Islanders going across the water is Trader Joe's. While participants were aware that there is not enough population on South Whidbey to support a Trader Joe's, they would like to see another grocery store on the South End that would provide the types of foods they purchase there.
- 4 Bayview Center will be one of the first sites for tourists coming onto the Island. There was strong agreement that the new development should be appealing for tourists as well as locals. It should have an attractive appearance that fits the Whidbey personality and encourages people to linger and visit with each other. The site is also an excellent location for much needed lodging on the south end, as well as good quality take out foods, and another restaurant offering different fare than what is available at the present time.
- 5 The location is seen as ideal for a public meeting space, including a community center for all ages and places for people to meet and talk.
- 6 A review by the Department of Transportation will help determine appropriate access to the site, with the possibility of left turn lanes, better parking and other elements that will make it easier to drive onto and off the property.
- 7 The highest priorities among the uses suggested for the property include:
  - 8 Marketplace for locally grown and produced foods (little Pike Place)
  - 9 More restaurants offering quick, healthy food
  - 10 Community center for all ages
  - 11 Stationery/office supplies
  - 12 Good grocery store or food co-op (similar to TJ's)
  - 13 Lodging (motel/restaurant)
  - 14 Bank (specifically, Bank of America branch)
  - 15 Improved access to site/safe, easy access and parking

## **DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

### **AWARENESS AND IMPRESSIONS OF GOOSEFOOT**

Everyone had heard about Goosefoot, but when asked about what Goosefoot is or what it does, only one person had a response. The woman who commented said that she knew about Goosefoot's recycling of homes to create affordable housing and she was aware of their organizing a place for community members to obtain the work of local artists. Another person added that he knew about them "doing a lot of innovative things."

Even though most did not have an understanding of what Goosefoot does, all had positive impressions. The term "community-minded," was mentioned, and someone else commented that Goosefoot is "non-profit." When asked if there were any negative impressions of Goosefoot, no one had a comment.

### **BUSINESSES AND SERVICES NEEDED ON SOUTH WHIDBEY**

The facilitator explained the planned new Bayview Center Development on the nine acres of land acquired by Goosefoot. This was followed by an extensive discussion of the kinds of goods and services that are easy to obtain on Whidbey, businesses that are needed on the Island, and prioritization of these needs.

#### ***What exists here now?***

The participants listed several types of businesses that are available on South Whidbey at the present including: Building supplies; grocery stores (though a person suggested that Red Apple may not be here in a couple of years and another "full-service grocery store" was needed); latte stands; art galleries; restaurants (though someone added that it would be nice to have some more); (too many) "high-priced" gas stations.

#### ***What do you go off-Island to purchase? What don't you want here?***

The discussion about what people went off Island to purchase led to several comments about what people do and do not want to see on South Whidbey. All in the group said that they went off the Island to the big box stores, including Costco and Target and other discount retailers. At the same time, there was strong consensus that no one wants to see any large, chain stores on South Whidbey, even if they do provide items at lower prices. As one person commented, "You accept the fact that living here there are certain inconveniences." Another later added, "We want the same things people in the City want, but there's not enough population to support having a business to provide these things at competitive prices, and we don't want Whidbey to look like Everett."

One woman noted that she has to go off-Island to purchase art supplies. Four of the 11 participants currently are involved with art on the island.

Trader Joe's is a major destination for people going off the Island. Several like the idea of having a Trader Joe's here, but they know there is not enough population to support one. Several commented they would like to see a Whole Foods-type store or a food co-op. Some suggested more restaurants, but defined the need as specialty and quality fast-food restaurants serving sushi, soup and sandwiches or the like.

Several noted that the new Bayview Center Development will be visible to tourists as they come on the Island, and this will be a great opportunity to provide goods and services for tourists, as well as the local community. There was agreement that the economy of Langley depends on tourism so the development should include lodging,

possibly adjacent to a restaurant that will be a “different” one for Whidbey.

A woman commented that there is a need for a medical clinic on South Whidbey, especially one that would be open on Saturdays, so that people would not need to drive to Oak Harbor or off the Island to get medical services.

Many liked the idea of having a covered area that would be used as a public gathering place.

Access to the site was another major topic of the discussion. Parking needs to be improved for the new development. Currently, there is no defined access and it is dangerous going into or out of the property. The development will need some additional road design features to provide safe and easy access to Bayview Center.

Another idea that resonated with the participants was a community center aimed at all ages. This center would include all kinds of activities, crafts, and games. A center in Richland was suggested as a model. Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park was described as another example of how the Bayview Center Development might operate with a mix of retail businesses (with the book store as the base), many different restaurants, lots of open space with tables, and a giant chess game, all of which have merged to function as the heart of the Lake Forest Park community (someone added that Lake Forest Park is not like the Whidbey Community).

Other suggestions included: a place to purchase casual clothing (especially winter casual clothing for women); an expanded selection of what is already here (fabrics, pet supplies, art supplies); bulk supplies (paper products, soaps, bathroom supplies, vitamins, etc.), but not in a Costco-type place; good stationery/office supplies store; a visitor and interpretive center; a bakery; bank branches (especially Bank of America); dry cleaner; alteration store;

Some of the participants visualized a facility that would have retail uses on the first floor and a second story for professional offices. Someone added that a small transit center, matching the needs of Whidbey, would also be a good idea.

### **LOOK AND FEEL WANTED IN THE BAYVIEW CENTER DEVELOPMENT**

Participants agreed that the new Bayview Center should have a look and feel that matches South Whidbey. Many mentioned the Bayview Corner as an example of how the new development could look. Some of the other descriptions of what would make the Center aesthetically pleasing for the community would include: no tall buildings; lots of trees; rural feeling; something that has character. If the building has two stories, the second story should either include professional offices and/or should be designed to encourage people to come to the second level (tables and seating).

Lighting should be designed so that it does not impinge on people’s vision.

*Bayview Center Development*

*Focus Group Discussion – Page 5*

The participants were very clear about what they don’t want in the Bayview Center: asphalt; metal buildings; tall buildings; chain stores; having the trees bordering the property clear cut (hopefully, some arrangement will be made with adjacent property owners to maintain a tree buffer); a strip mall; expansion of the gas station; and automobile accessories.

### **DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

As participants mentioned the types of uses wanted at the Bayview property, the facilitator made a list of these suggestions. After all of the suggestions were listed, the members of the group were asked to select the five items they believe are most important. The list and the number of people prioritizing each item included:

<u>Suggestions</u>	<u>No. Giving</u>
<u>Priority</u>	
Marketplace for locally grown and produced foods (little Pike Place)	8
More restaurants offering quick, healthy food	7
Community center for all ages	6
Stationery/office supplies	5
Good grocery store or food co-op (similar to TJ's)	5
Lodging (motel/restaurant)	5
Bank (specifically, Bank of America branch)	3
Improved access to site/safe, easy access and parking	3
Medical clinic	2
Clothing – country (Whidbey-style) clothing	2
Art supplies	2
Bakery	2
Small transit center (to match So. Whidbey)	2
Nice restaurant with “different” feeling	1
Dry cleaner	1
Alterations	1
Expanded fabric store	
Bulk supplies (what Costco has, but not Costco-type store)	

**CONCLUDING COMMENTS: IF YOU WERE IN CHARGE OF PLANNING THE BAYVIEW CENTER DEVELOPMENT, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR THREE PRIORITIES?**

Each participant, in turn, responded to the final question.

**Ken:** A community center rather than individual stores; not like a big mall (he suggested it should be similar to what has been done in Corvallis, OR).

**Sande:** It should have quality construction and aesthetics should play a major role, with an enduring design; there should be a specialized area in the grocery store aimed at one and two-person households (seniors)

**Gordon:** Aesthetics is very important; there should be an area for community gatherings; it should be an attractive place for visitors to the island

**Larry:** The center should have a design that fits the island character; there should be open area with gardens and plants that brings all of the shops together

**Kathleen:** A community center is great idea; it should include a meeting place and a hall for dances and yoga classes

**Lisa:** It should have a community flavor with green spaces and public art

**Craig:** The center will be a multi-use facility that incorporates businesses needed on the Island in a development that is similar to the indoor mall on Capital Hill; it will have an open area with tables and chairs, a news stand, espresso stand, and the kinds of everyday things that encourage people to come here to meet their neighbors; a multi-use concept with central area and lodging to attract tourists

**Lisa:** Maintaining a Whidbey feel to the place is essential; good accessibility; and multi-uses in one area

**Dave:** It should include a community center for all ages (similar to Third Place Books); a gathering place for everyone and matched to the character of Whidbey Island character; good access to facilities to encourage people to come here; need to have good traffic flow around the development; more lodging, places to stay

**Joann:** Something unique; it shouldn't look like a strip mall; buildings should be placed strategically around the property; good access; nice ambiance to encourage tourists to stop by

**Barbara:** Use green building supplies; emphasize recycling; parking, lodging, green space

**APPENDIX: DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Bayview Center  
Focus Group Discussion with Community Residents  
August 9, 2007**

- I. Introduction
  - A. Opening remarks – remodel and addition of new mixed use properties (retail, professional and residential); phased development with project to be completed by 2013
  - B. Name, community, years living on South Whidbey; amount of time each year spent on Whidbey (full or part-time)
- II. How many of you have heard or read something about Goosefoot in the last year (show of hands)?
  - A. What is your understanding of what Goosefoot is, or what it does?
  - B. Overall, what are the positive impressions you have of Goosefoot, or have heard from others?
  - C. What negative impressions, if any, do you have of Goosefoot or what negative comments have you heard from others?
- III. What types of retail and professional businesses are currently available to you on South Whidbey?
  - A. What do you generally go off-Island to purchase (goods or services)?
  - B. What is available on the Island, but with little selection and/or at prices that seem high?
- IV. Let's talk about the kinds of businesses or other uses you feel are needed and would fit with the new development at Bayview Center? What would you like to see? (MAKE A LIST)
- V. Priorities: You have 5 dots each. Please come up and mark the five uses you believe are most needed in the new development?
- VI. I'd like you to visualize the kind of development you'd like to see in Bayview Center.
  - A. In general, what kind of look would it have/how would you like to hear it described in the community?
  - B. What kind of look or feel would be negative for the community?
- VII. Conclusion: If you were in charge of the new Bayview Center Development, what would be your priorities for assuring this will be an asset to the community?