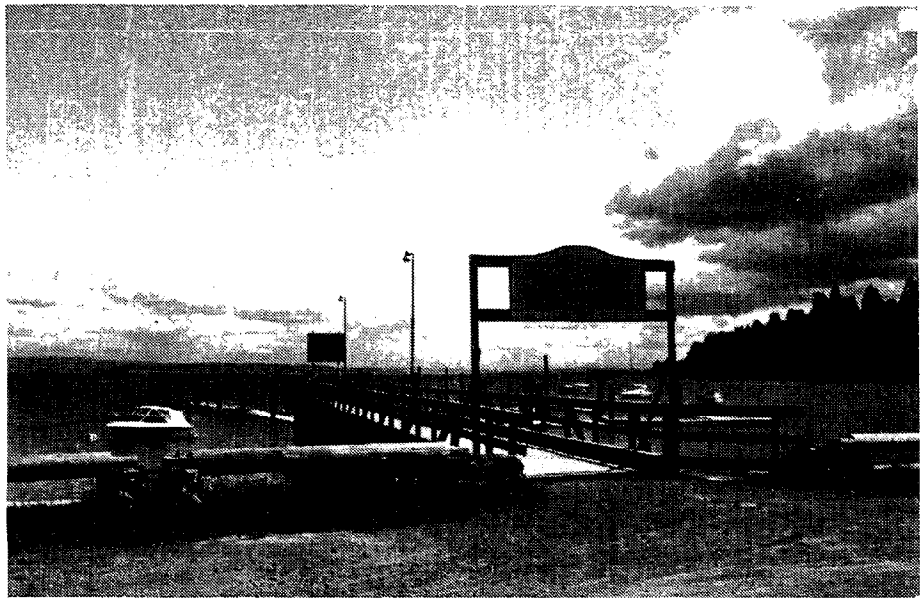


LANGLEY WATERFRONT STUDY

HT
168
.L36
D42
1983

Dearborn/Smith Associates, Inc.

with Rich Untermann, Landscape Architect **Susan Heikkala, Urban Planner**

AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

LANGLEY WATERFRONT STUDY

Property of CSC Library

A REPORT TO THE

CITY OF LANGLEY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE NOAA
COASTAL SERVICES CENTER
2234 SOUTH HOBSON AVENUE
CHARLESTON, SC 29405-2413

Prepared by:

The Dearborn/Smith Associates, Inc.
Suite 333, Grand Central Building
216 First Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98104

Nancy Fox, Project Manager

with:

Rich Untermann, Landscape Architect
Susan Heikkala, Urban Planner

HT168.L36 D42 1983

The preparation of this document was financed in part through a grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology with funds obtained from the National Oceanagraphic and Atmospheric Administration, as authorized by Section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS	3
ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	6
Shoreline Erosion and Bluff Instability	8
First Street Slippage	10
Phil Simon Park/Boat Harbor	12
Sea Wall Park	15
Town Access	18
Land Use and Design	19
FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION	22

ILLUSTRATIONS

		Page
Figure 1	VICINITY MAP	1
Figure 2	KEY ISSUES	7
Figure 3	FIRST AND SECOND STREET IMPROVEMENTS	10
Figure 4	FIRST STREET SLOPE DEVELOPMENT	11
Figure 5	REALIGNMENT OF PHIL SIMON PARK	13
Figure 6	SEA WALL PARK CONCEPT	15
Figure 7	PARK DEVELOPMENT AT FOOT OF ANTHES STREET	16
Figure 8	TOWN ENTRY	18

I. INTRODUCTION

Langley's history is closely tied to its waterfront. Located on Saratoga Passage at the south end of Whidbey Island (Figure 1), the town once functioned as an active port, serving the needs of local farms and logging companies. Langley was also a landing for the early Puget Sound ferry. Over time, port activity has diminished but the waterfront has continued to be the hub of the community. With its spectacular views, the town's shoreline offers a setting of outstanding scenic beauty for a variety of residential, commercial, and recreational activities, and represents a natural attraction for tourism. However, significant development hazards and access limitations are associated with its high bluffs and unstable slopes.

Recognizing the special opportunities and constraints associated with its shoreline, the Town of Langley initiated the Langley Waterfront Study. The study was designed to address a range of objectives: economic development, resource protection, historic preservation, public access and recreation. As such, the recommendations presented in this final report are designed to serve more than one purpose. They are aimed at preserving valuable shoreline resources while at the same time promoting use and development which is in keeping with the goals and scale of the town.

The Waterfront Study was undertaken in conjunction with a similar study for the Town of Coupeville, with funding by the Federal Coastal Zone Management Program. It was completed in three phases: (1) Inventory and Analysis; (2) Preliminary Recommendations; and (3) Final Report and Recommendations. During the inventory phase, background information was collected and assessed, and several public meetings were held to identify significant issues. Preliminary recommendations to address the key issues were then prepared in draft form, allowing for public review and comment. In the third phase, this final report was prepared, incorporating revisions to the preliminary recommendations based on the input received.

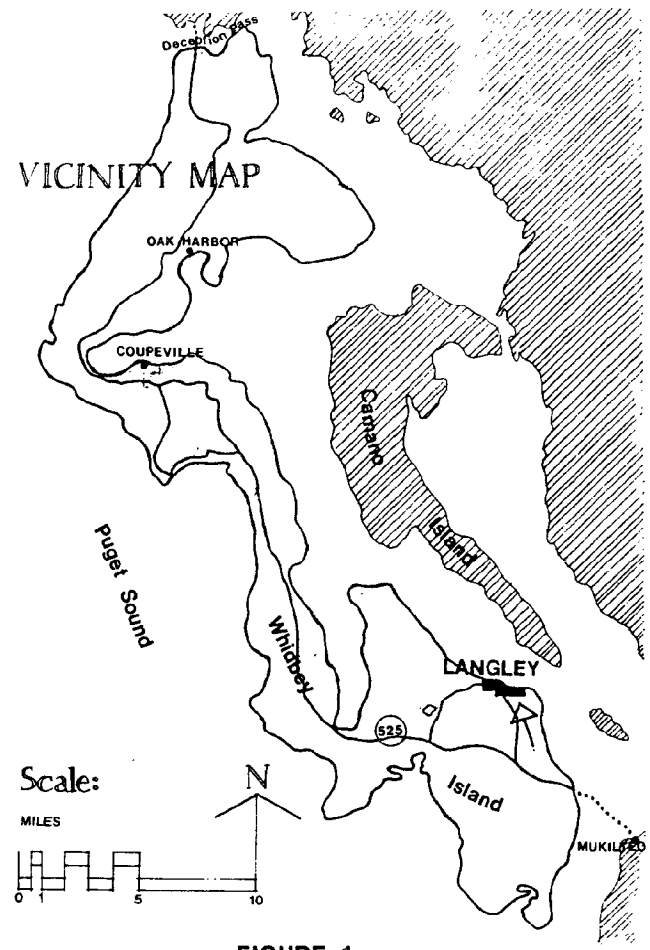
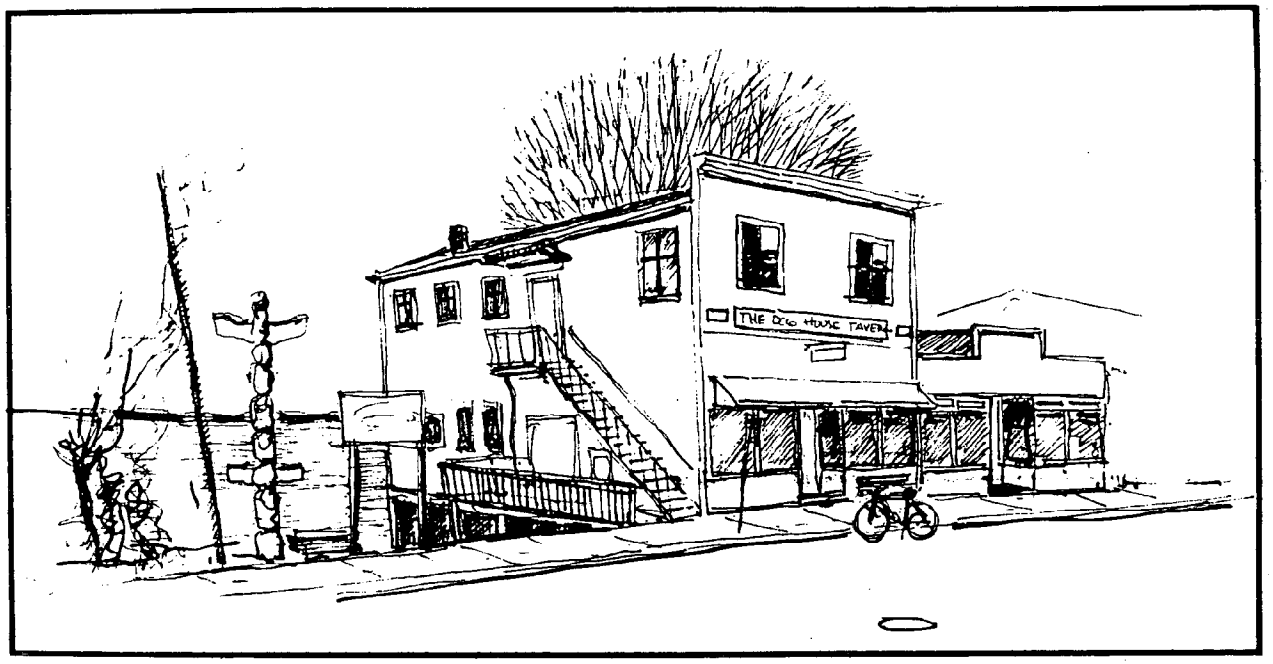


FIGURE 1


THE DOG HOUSE TAVERN

II. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing shoreline conditions were assessed during the first phase of the Waterfront Study. The inventory focused on those features having the greatest bearing on waterfront use and development, highlighting assets and potential problems. Three working maps were prepared to illustrate these features: Generalized Land Use, Resource Assessment, and Shoreline Characteristics. In addition to conducting extensive field investigation and literature review, the project team met with elected officials, business leaders, and residents to gain an understanding of critical issues affecting the town's shoreline. These meetings revealed an active interest and a high level of community concern relating to future use and development of the shoreline.

Land Use and Town Character

Langley's historic waterfront continues to thrive as the center of town. The ongoing bustle of activity, remodeling, and new business contruction along First Street demonstrate the economic vitality of this area. The intermixing of tourist-oriented businesses with general town services, all consolidated within a relatively compact business zone, is an important element in its success. This well-defined core contibutes to the town's strong sense of community, and serves as the focus of cultural activities for all of south Whidbey.

Outside the business core, Langley's shoreline is primarily devoted to residential uses, with houses dotting the high bluffs above the water. The homes are generally dispersed, often with large open areas in between them. The rural, agricultural character of the shoreline in these areas is in sharp contrast to the relatively dense development of the downtown waterfront. Commercial development on the shoreline outside the downtown is limited to Langley Marina, Inc. and Nichol's Bros. Boat Builders in the vicinity of the town dock. The commercial zoning in this area extends eastward along the shore to include the sites of two existing houses.

The character of existing development in Langley is a striking feature of the town. The historic flavor of the town's architecture, particularly along First Street, is a unifying theme which gives the town a special identity and contributes to its small town charm. The small, human scale of the buildings and walkways is inviting for pedestrians. These qualities represent a major attraction for both residents and visitors to Langley.

Shoreline Features

Most of Langley's shoreline consists of unstable, actively eroding bluffs, averaging 50 feet in height. Evidence of past landslides appear up and down the coast, while no signs remain of roads once existing seaward of the current shoreline. Bulkheads constructed along portions of the shoreline, such as the Sea Wall in downtown, protect the toe of the slope against wave erosion and have contributed to bank stabilization. However, a critical landslide threatening First Street at the eastern end of Sea Wall Park indicates that wave action is not the only force at play.

Economy

Langley's economy was previously based on agriculture and logging, but the town now serves primarily as a service and retail center for south Whidbey. Lacking an industrial base, the town relies heavily on visitors and people from the surrounding communities coming there to shop. The

scenic character, small town qualities, and rural island environment which attract visitors to Langley have also been an attraction for retirement housing, and retirees comprise a significant percentage of the town's population.

During the 1970's, growth of the "goods and services" sector of the economy, closely linked to the number of residents and tourists visiting the town, out paced all other forms of economic activity.* For the future, tourism continues to be the most promising direction for economic growth. The town's role as a retirement community also has potential for future growth. In spite of its location several miles off the main island highway, Langley can encourage visitors by building on its scenic, small town character, its waterfront location, and its role as a cultural center. Enhancing shoreline resources will clearly be an important element in any economic development strategy for the town.

The City of Langley currently operates on a very small tax base, making public improvements difficult and limiting the level of maintenance for existing property and facilities. For example, the town currently has a moratorium on sewer extensions to serve new development because of questions about the capacity of its sewage treatment plant. The town's ability to finance needed improvements such as this, and to implement solutions to the problems identified in this study, will depend upon the community's ability to sustain a healthy economy.

* Preliminary Draft, Langley Comprehensive Plan, 1981.

Shoreline Access

Langley's location on the water is recognized as a key feature of the town. However, opportunities for shoreline access in Langley are limited by the town's high bluffs and unstable slopes, and the cool northern exposure of the shore.

Public access is currently provided at the boat harbor and at Sea Wall Park. Sea Wall Park serves both as a recreation area providing access to the beach and as a bulkhead stabilizing the downtown waterfront. Its recreational use is somewhat limited by the park's exposure to northerly winds, coupled with lengthy periods of shade due to its orientation. The boat harbor offers a more protected site for swimming and picnicking, and is more actively used. However, full use and development of this area is limited by the small amount of space available for public use and the steep and narrow access down Wharf Street. The cost of overcoming these constraints would be high and has, to date, precluded further development.

Historical records explain why Langley was originally sited in a location with limited natural water access. According to a letter written by Jacob Anthes, founder of Langley, the reason is as follows:

> "I had plenty of time in exploring the island. Nearly every rock and corner became known to me. I found that every ridge of hills ran in such a way that the spot where Langley now stands could be reached from nearly anywhere without crossing any of them. I felt then, being only a young man, that sooner or later these lands must be occupied and that a town must be the result."

As in the early 1900's, Langley continues to be easily reached by car, with a number of roads approaching the town from the east, west, and south. However, the high bank shoreline continues to be a constraint, limiting full use and development of public access to the water.

Summary

Langley's waterfront represents a key asset of the town, offering recreational opportunities, dramatic views, and a focal point for the town and surrounding area. The town's rural Puget Sound setting, within reasonable proximity to Seattle, makes Langley ideal for tourists and others who are looking for scenic trips to take close to home. The small scale of the town, its pedestrian orientation and distinctive architecture all contribute to the special character which has attracted both residents and visitors. Langley will do well to capitalize on these qualities in planning for future growth and development.

The analysis of existing conditions also revealed a number of problems or constraints to be addressed in achieving the town's potential. Physical characteristics of the shoreline -- steep, high bluffs, unstable slopes, and a cool northern exposure -- make it difficult and costly to enhance public access and use of the shoreline. With a limited economic base, even basic public facilities such as sewage treatment facilities will be difficult for the town to finance.

Specific issues are discussed in the following chapter. Recommendations for addressing the identified problems are designed to build upon the recognized strengths of the town.

III. ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of existing conditions and meetings with town officials, residents, and businessmen identified six key issues relating to Langley's waterfront, as illustrated in Figure 2. The issues include:

1. SHORELINE EROSION AND BLUFF INSTABILITY
2. FIRST STREET SLIPPAGE
3. PHIL SIMON PARK/BOAT HARBOR
4. SEA WALL PARK
5. LAND USE AND DESIGN
6. TOWN ACCESS

In the following sections, each issue is discussed and recommendations are made. Implementation and funding strategies are discussed in the last chapter.

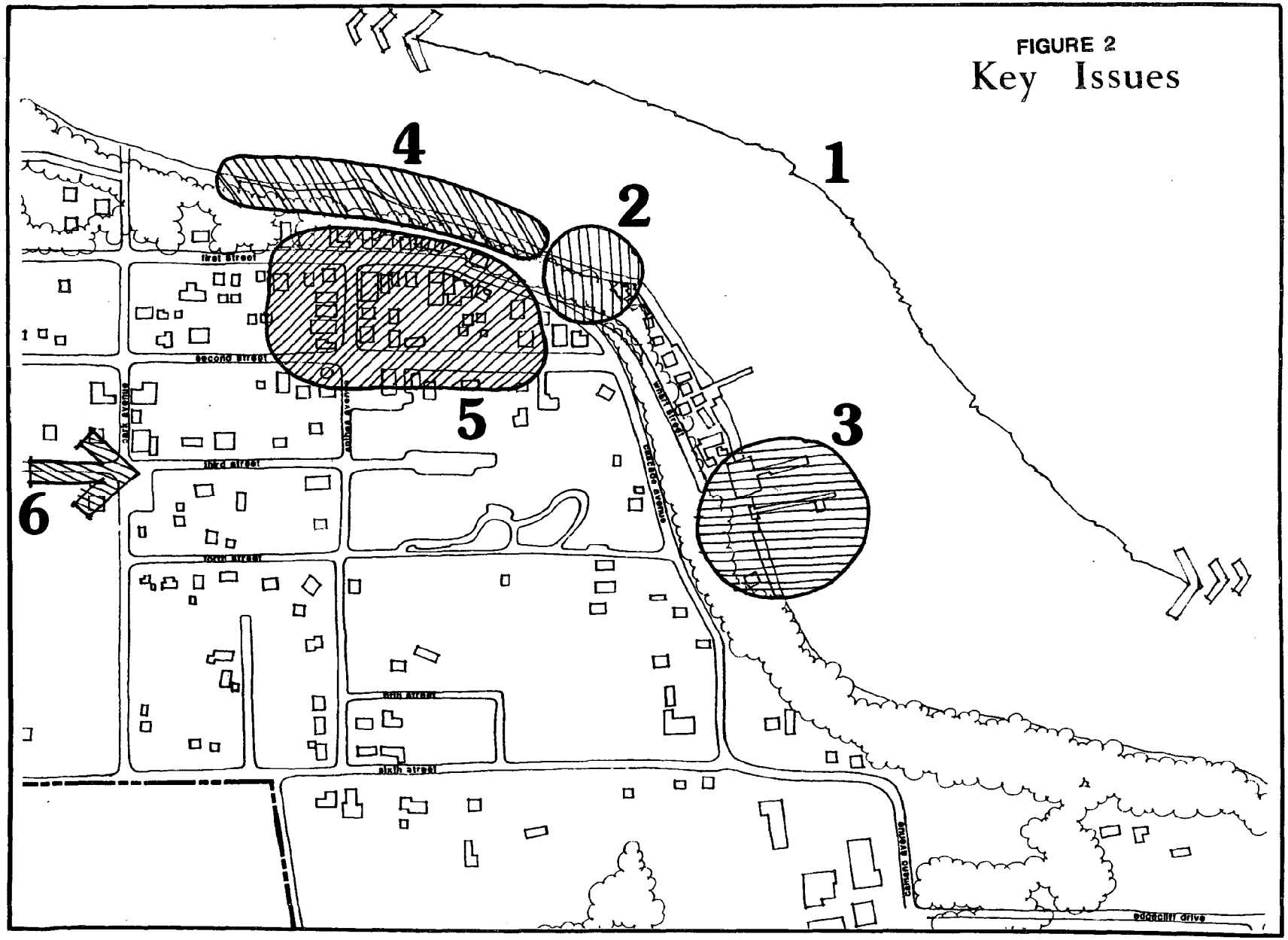


FIGURE 2
Key Issues

1 Shoreline Erosion and Bluff Instability

Background

Shoreline erosion and bluff instability were identified as a significant community concern affecting both existing and future waterfront development. Although reliable bluff retreat rates have not been calculated, historical evidence of the problem includes the loss of a road once existing along downtown Langley, seaward of Sea Wall Park, loss of a portion of Edgecliff Drive, and extensive landslide debris currently visible along the shoreline. The Island County Shoreline Atlas designates the entire Langley shoreline as "unstable", except for the area protected by the Sea Wall. While there are no simple solutions to this problem, a better understanding of the causes and extent of the hazard will be critical to properly managing future shoreline development and taking corrective actions to protect existing development.

Available information on the geologic character of Langley's shoreline and causes of erosion/instability is presently very limited. It is generally acknowledged that the specific causes of instability are not uniform along the shoreline, but rather by location. The main causes of the problem appear to be:

- Wave action undercutting the toe of the slope;
- Bluffs composed of older, cracked sediments which have been weakened by vertical fracturing and water intrusion;
- Groundwater moving laterally through the ground to the bluffs, perched on an impermeable layer and fed by upland springs and/or septic tanks;
- Surface water flowing over the edge of the high bluffs, causing erosion and superficial slides.
- Exposure to winds from the north.

Most of the lots along Langley's shoreline have already been developed. However, there are some vacant lots remaining and, if development pressures increase, the town should expect that there will be new proposals for shoreline development. While Island County has a review procedure for development in flood and landslide areas, Langley's development codes do not include any special standards relating to unstable and actively eroding shoreline areas. This will be of concern to the town since communities can be considered liable for damages suffered by private property owners where hazards are known to exist and appropriate government action has not been taken. Reasonable regulations developed with expert advice have generally been considered adequate to serve this purpose.

Recommendations

A two-pronged approach is recommended in which: (1) the town completes the basic geological mapping and analysis needed to define the shoreline hazard; and then (2) in hazardous areas, individual property owners are required to complete site-specific studies and incorporate setbacks, drainage controls, and other conditions needed to insure safe development.

1. The following studies are suggested to better define the shoreline problem and assess corrective measures:

   (A) Basic geological mapping to identify subsurface materials, bank conditions, evidence of drainage problems, slides, etc, should be completed by an engineering geologist knowledgable in shoreline

processes. The analysis should indicate the causes of erosion and instability along the shoreline and should delineate hazardous areas. It should also identify a range of appropriate structural and non-structural measures to use in areas with these conditions. This information would be useful in preparing development regulations, alerting prospective builders to potentially hazardous shoreline conditions, and would also provide a basis for Langley to evaluate proposals for new development on the shoreline. State Departments of Natural Resources and Ecology staff may be able to help in this effort.

(B) If there are areas where shoreline instability is determined to be primarily drainage-related, it may be necessary to complete a study of upland drainage. The study would examine characteristics such as existing drainage channels, surface water patterns, groundwater flow, and underground springs within basins contributing drainage into identified problem areas. Appropriate corrective measures such as structural improvements, drainage controls for new development, restrictions on septic tank use, etc. could then be identified for these areas.

2. Langley should adopt an ordinance establishing development standards and a review process for those areas identified as potentially hazardous. At a minimum, setbacks from the edge of the bluff, bulkheading standards, and drainage controls to mitigate erosion and landslide impacts should be included. Because it is difficult to establish a uniform setback appropriate for all portions of the shoreline, Langley may want to provide for variances from the adopted standard based on detailed, site-specific studies. Such studies should be the responsibility of the property owner seeking a variance and should demonstrate that the proposed structure will be safe and will not adversely impact neighboring properties.

Several efforts are now underway to determine an appropriate development setback standard. The State Department of Natural Resources is working with Island County and several other counties to develop a reasonable formula. Options being considered would base the setback on the height of the bluff, or a percentage of the height plus a standard margin of safety. The town can benefit from the state and county work in developing its standards.

The recommended approach is intended to be flexible to respond to variable conditions along the shoreline, while insuring that critical bluff stabilization and human safety issues are addressed. Developers would be alerted to potentially unstable conditions and could choose to either locate buildings outside the hazardous area, or employ professional expertise needed to build safely close to the shore. After further geologic analysis of the areawide problems (Recommendation 1 above) is completed, the town should re-evaluate and refine, if necessary, the size of the shoreline area subject to its shoreline regulation and the specific standards applied to new development.

2 First Street Slippage

Background

Slippage along First Street is of critical concern because it threatens the historic business district and the eastern edge of First Street itself. The Sea Wall has reduced slippage caused by wave erosion in this area, but recent landslides at the east end of the Sea Wall suggest that wave erosion is not the only process at work in that vicinity. Bank failure continues to plague the bluff in spite of the bulkhead below, and may cause further loss of land in that area. The bluff has retreated to within several feet of the road near Wharf Street, and it is clear that the City must act quickly if the road is to be saved. The City has recently begun working with the State Department of Natural Resources and Island County Soil Conservation District to determine the specific causes and possible solutions to this problem.

Recommendations

Exact solutions will require further geotechnical studies, but could include the following:

1. First Street could be converted to a one-way street, thereby reducing the weight and vibrations of vehicular traffic on the steep slope. (See Figure 3) The westbound traffic would be eliminated and rerouted via Second Street, looping around to First Street via Anthes Avenue. This would make room for angle parking on First Street, thereby expanding the number of parking spaces available for

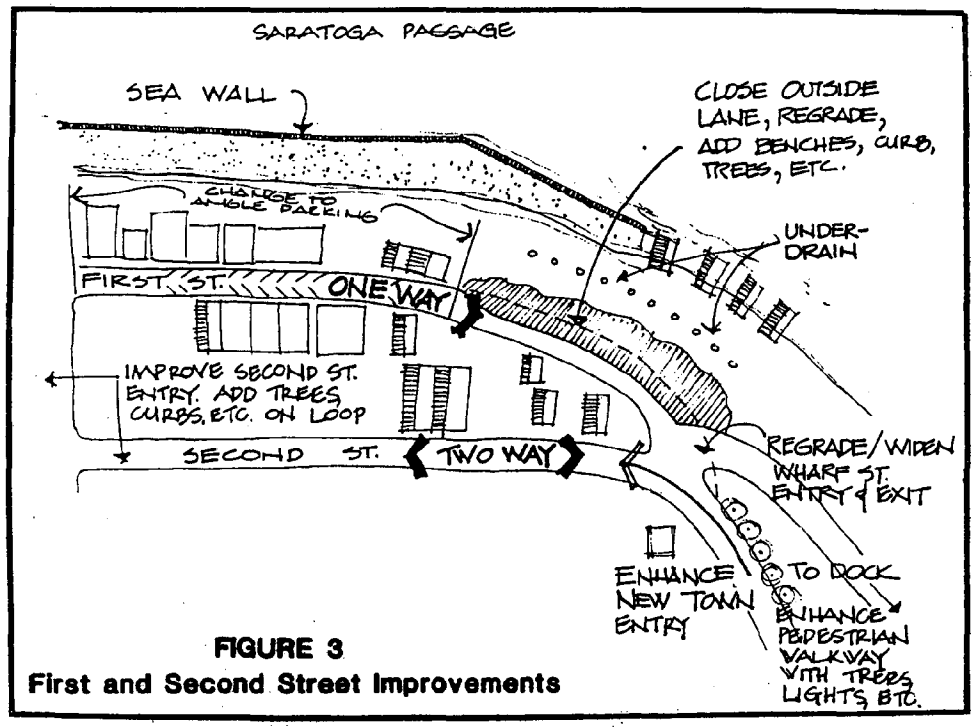


FIGURE 3
First and Second Street Improvements

downtown businesses. East of the businesses, the unused traffic lane could be removed and graded back to reduce the angle of slope, if necessary, and pedestrian access for viewing could be improved. The entrance to Wharf Street could be widened to improve traffic safety. A curb on the north side of the street could re-direct surface water away from the bluff. Improvements such as street trees, landscaping, and curbs should be added along the circulation loop to create a new town entry along Second Street and a sense of continuity throughout the downtown. Signage and street improvements should be added at the corner of Second and Camano, to direct and invite traffic into town along the new entry. Design standards discussed below (Issue #5) could be applied to new development along Second Street to enhance the historic character and pedestrian orientation of the town entry.

2. Subsurface groundwater, if found to be a problem, may be relieved with drain lines installed perpendicular to the road, reducing the effect of perched water. Geotechnical studies would be necessary for evaluation and design of this option.

3. New commercial/residential structures could be stepped down the bluff on the north side of First Street, with extensive foundations and drainage controls to counter the slippage potential. (See Figure 4) The cost of foundations/drainage would be high, but may be offset by the attractive location. If properly designed, such development could help stabilize the slope by controlling drainage and preventing erosion. The lower levels of the structures would face onto Sea Wall Park, taking advantage of the park's outstanding views while offering protection from the park's cold, windy exposure. This type of development would work well with the promenade concept proposed for the length of Sea Wall Park. (See Issue 4 below)

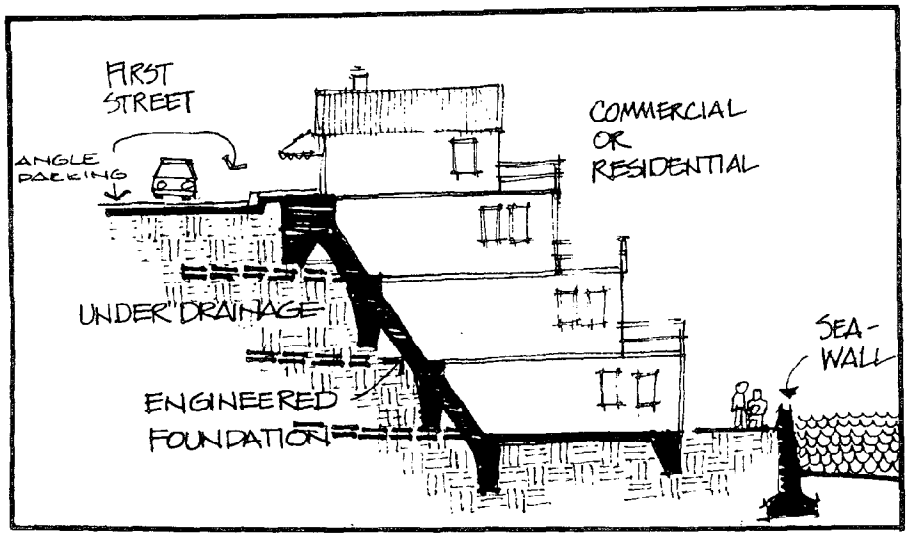


FIGURE 4. First Street Slope Development

3 Phil Simon Park/Boat Harbor

Background

The waterfront area at the foot of Wharf Street, including Phil Simon Park and the boat harbor, is the most heavily used segment of Langley's shoreline. Compared to Sea Wall Park, this site offers more protected access to the beach and water, and is thus more popular as a public recreation area. Since water access is a key to tourism, there is naturally much community interest in expanding use and development of this valuable resource.

Existing improvements in the area are limited. A public dock adjacent to the boat launch is used for fishing. Forty two boat slips were constructed off the dock, but have been recently removed because of breakwater problems and a resultant lawsuit. Phil Simon Park is an unimproved, grassy area at the foot of the slope, separated from the beach by a gravel parking lot and boat trailer maneuvering area. The park is not as attractive or useful as it could be, and has been reduced in size by the parking lot. The parking area has also decreased the size of the beach at high tides. The public use area is further limited by private land ownerships east and west of the boat launch.

Wharf Street access is another major constraint to use and development of this area. Wharf Street is steep and narrow, appearing unsafe for pedestrians, and thus there is no clear pedestrian link between downtown and the marina area. Vehicular traffic faces a steep, difficult intersection with First Street at the top of the hill. Street widening and improvements needed to remedy this problem promise to be expensive due to the steepness of both uphill and downhill slopes, coupled with geologic instability. However, the only access alternative would be to construct a road up the hill from the park to the southeast, which would cross a very hazardous and unstable slope and would require expensive private property condemnation.

Recommendations

1. Langley has already taken a significant step toward expanding use of the boat harbor through the development of a breakwater and 42 boat slips. Hopefully, the legal dispute involving the breakwater can be favorably and quickly resolved so the boat slips can be put into use. This small marina will facilitate weekend boat trips from Seattle, or stops en-route to other Puget Sound locations.

2. There has been considerable community support for the possible future development of a large scale marina which could accomodate 300 or more boats. Due to the present state of the economy, the current market for marina development is weak. However, this outlook should be expected to change as the economy as a whole improves. Since it takes many years to get such a project underway, there is a long lead time before such a facility can be in operation. Planning and analysis would need to begin well in advance, with the City of Langley and the Port of South Whidbey working closely together.

The first step will be to complete a careful economic analysis to determine the project's feasibility. All of the major actions involved in such a project should be considered in the analysis:

(A) Acquisition of neighboring residences and land for parking and marina;

(B) Construction of a sea wall and filling for parking;

(C) Widening and improving Wharf Street or development of alternative access, potentially including stairs connecting Cascade Street to the marina for pedestrian use;

(D) Dredging for boat access and use;

(E) Construction of marina facilities and an effective breakwater.

In addition to assessing economic feasibility, advance planning for the marina should include evaluation of community impacts. A major marina project would be of a larger scale than development now existing in the town, and care should be taken not to lose Langley's small town character and charm. The scale and character of the town are recognized as perhaps its most prized assets, and should be carefully safeguarded. Another significant tradeoff for the town to consider is the loss of a natural beach and swimming area for the town's residents. It may be difficult to accomodate swimmers in close proximity to the marina because of the level of activity and the noise and water quality impacts inherent in such a project.

3. Because of the high costs associated with a major marina and the lengthy planning involved, this development concept was viewed as a long-range option for the town. In the interim, a number of small scale improvements are recommended to make better use of the existing facilities and make the area more attractive for residents and visitors:

(A) Realign Phil Simon Park to pull it away from the slope, connecting it with the beach and water. Two alternative park configurations are suggested for consideration. The first alternative, shown in Figure 5a, is to realign the park to run from the concrete bulkhead to the base of the hill on the easterly side of the town's property. Lost parking spaces could be retrieved on the westerly side of the park as an exchange, and revised parking locations for adjacent residences could be designated. Such an arrangement would allow park users direct beach access, and improve views and sun from the park. The cost could be minimal, including log curbs separating parking from the park, planting a buffer between the park and easterly residents, encouraging lawn to grow in the abandoned parking spaces, and adding benches, picnic tables, etc. Since properties east of the park have legal rights of access through this area, some form of vehicular access

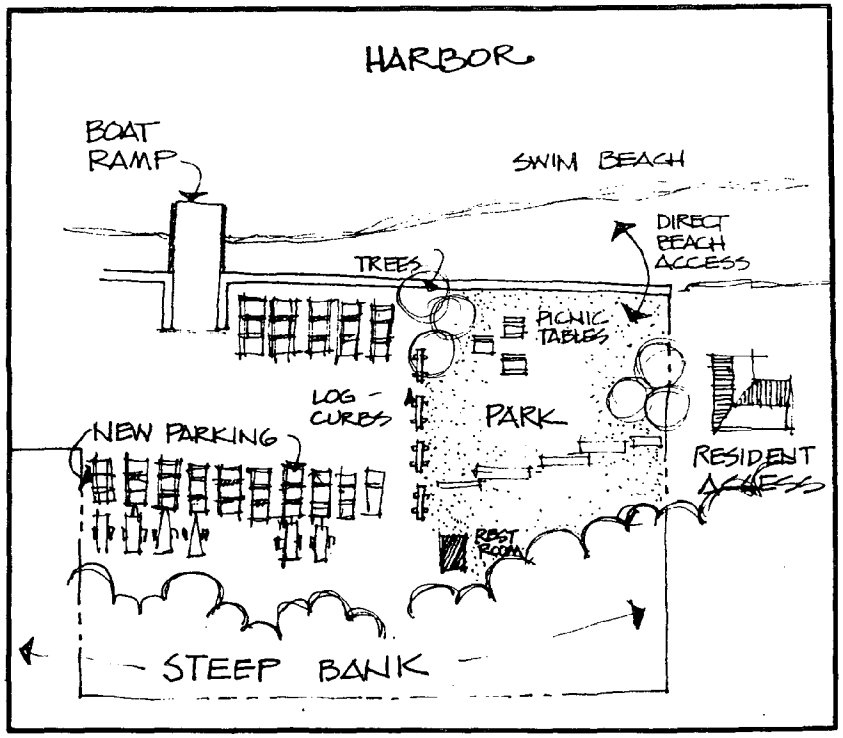


FIGURE 5a. Realignment of Phil Simon Park

through the park would be necessary. "Grass-crete" is an example of a material which could be used to accommodate an occassional car or service truck, but would otherwise look like a grassy lawn. Ideally, the town could negotiate with the property owners to consolidate and improve one access route behind the houses, rather than maintaining one on the water side.

Another alternative park configuration is shown in Figure 5b. This alignment avoids the potential conflict over access to neighboring houses, but still provides a direct connection between the park and the beach. Again, benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, and some landscaping could be added to make the park more attractive for recreational use.

(B) A line should be striped along the water side of Wharf Street to designate a pedestrian walkway. There is insufficient width for both traffic and foot use, but the symbolic suggestion of a pedestrian space should slow traffic, and encourage foot use. "Watch for Pedestrian" signs could be added, and speed bumps installed at the top, bottom and mid points.

(C) The existing pedestrian walkway on Cascade Avenue above the marina should be improved to capitalize on panoramic views of the marina, Puget Sound, and the Cascades. Improvements could include landscaping, street lighting, and additional benches. Enhancing this area for viewing would create a tourist attraction and would also be an asset for the elderly, who could stroll along the bluff and enjoy the views without making the difficult descent to the marina.

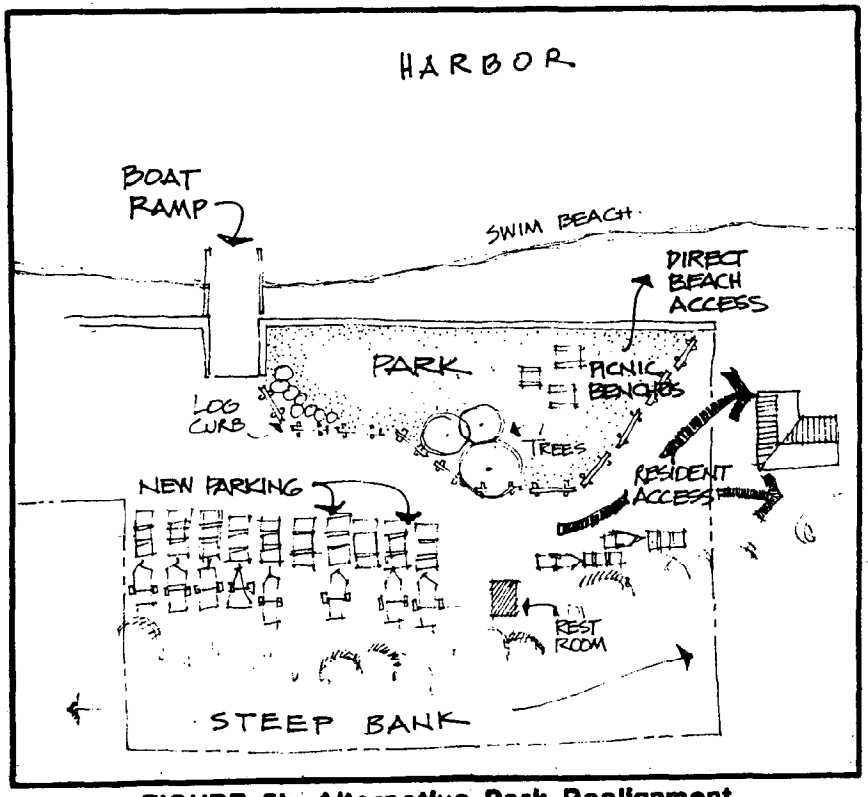


FIGURE 5b. Alternative Park Realignment

Sea Wall Park 4

Background

Built atop a cement bulkhead, Sea Wall Park has made a major contribution to bluff stability by eliminating wave-cutting erosion at the toe of the slope. It also serves as a recreational area affording public access to the water. While the park is beginning to look lived in -- with some vegetation and park furniture -- it is not yet a fully comfortable and useful place. Due to the park's northern exposure, it is shaded during most of the day. Combined with prevailing winds from the northwest, the park is often cold and windy. Limited public ownership, including a ten foot strip along the bulkhead, the Anthes Street end, and one parcel at eastern edge of park, limits opportunities for constructing public improvements within the park.

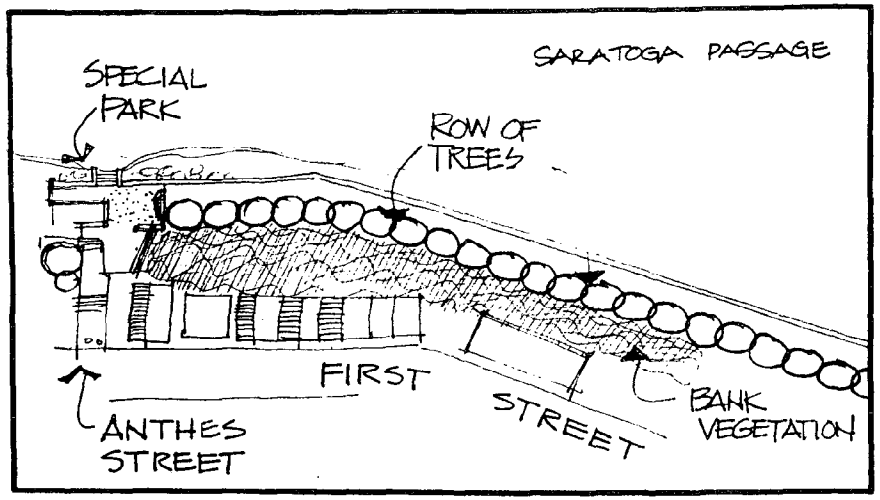
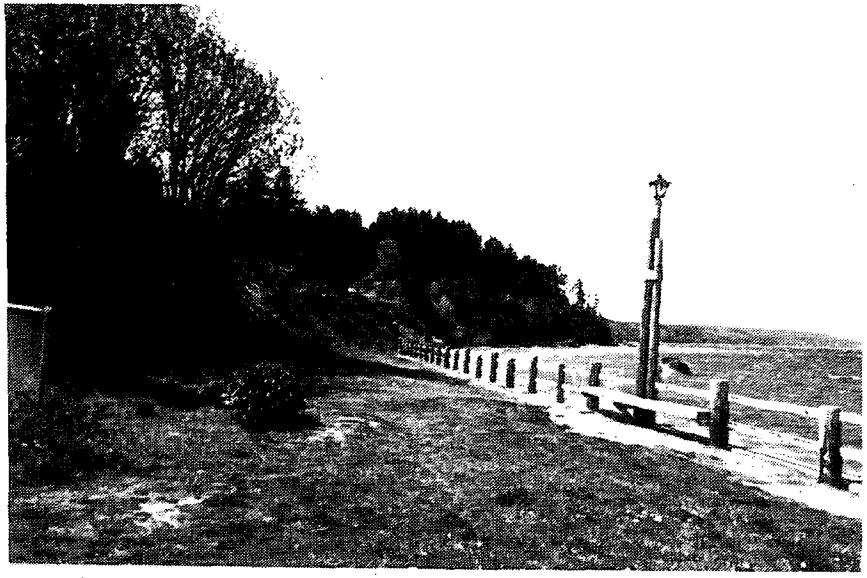


FIGURE 6. Sea Wall Park Concept

Recommendations

The restricted right of public access and the northern orientation of the park suggest minimal development along its length, with more extensive development at the foot of Anthes Street as follows:

1. Plant a row of trees at the back side of the public lands along the length of the park. These could be Purple Leaf Plums, duplicating their use throughout town, or a pine tree capable of living in salt-rich places. The trees would create a formal, park-like feeling at minimal cost, offer some wind diversion, and be visible from passing boats. (See Figure 6)



Sea Wall Park--Looking West from Anthes Street End

2. Develop a more substantial park in the road right-of-way at the foot of Anthes Street. The area is wide, and easily accessible, has pleasant views, and is a logical location for more extensive, but compact development. The park could include a paved walking area, a small lawn, formal seating, wind protection, various level changes and planting. Limiting development to the Anthes Street area will limit the costs of the park maintenance and improvements as well as being easily accessible and somewhat in keeping with the small scale of Langley. (See Figures 7a and 7b)

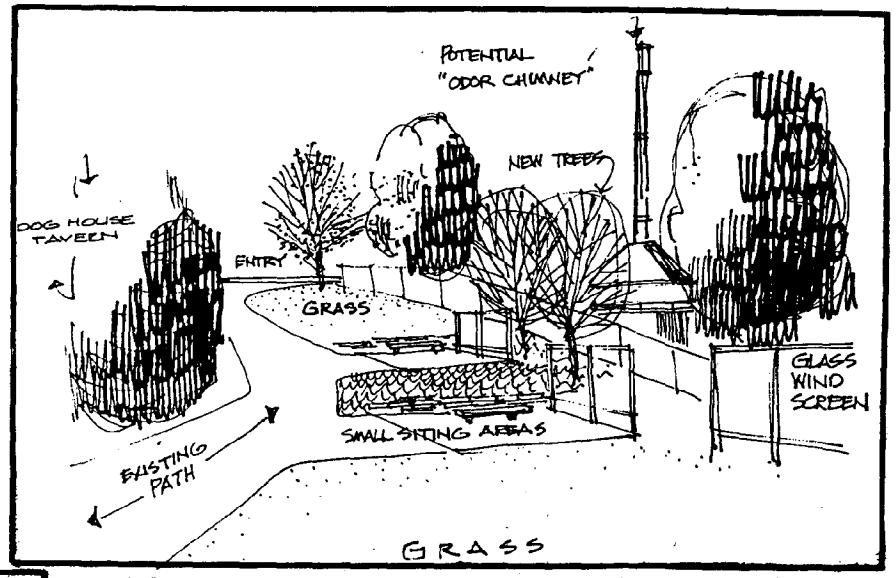


FIGURE 7b. Park Development --View from Below

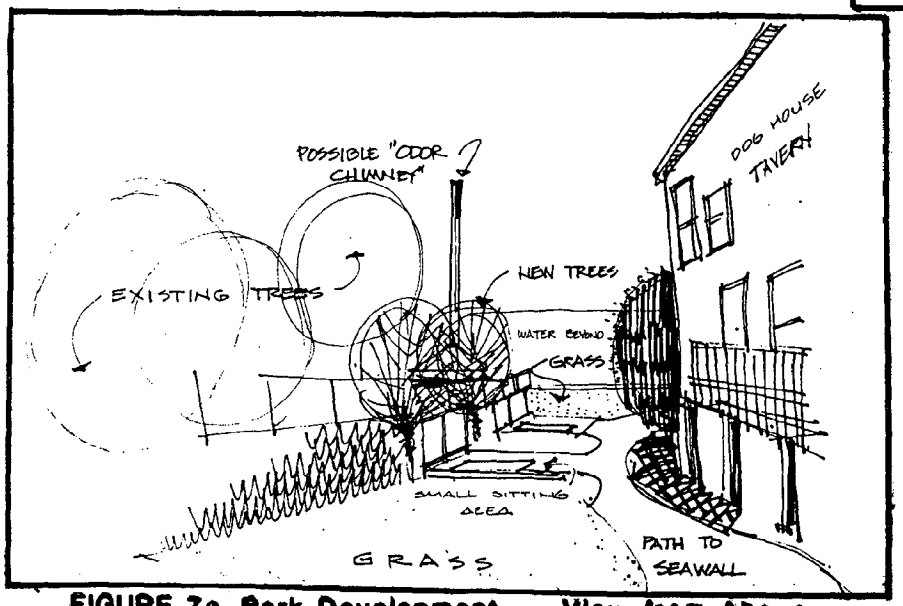


FIGURE 7a. Park Development -- View from Above

Odors from the sewage treatment plant were noted as a potential problem for the park at Anthes. Since the town is in the process of considering options for sewage treatment plant expansion, it is recommended that the engineering studies look at possible ways to screen the park from odor. The problem would occur only during winds from certain directions, suggesting that a wind screen or chimney could possibly be designed to catch and deflect the winds up and over the park. Other alternative sites along Sea Wall Park were examined to avoid the odor problem, but none offered the same ease of access and maintenance as the Anthes Street end.

3. Encourage the existing buildings on First Street to expand down the slope to Seawall Park, as discussed above. (See Figure 4) In addition to stabilizing the bank, it would attract people down to the park, and would be in keeping with the concept of the park as a lineal promenade. Property owners building down to the park could be encouraged to provide park landscaping and other improvements on an individual basis to enhance their development and the park. (See Figure 4 above)

5 Town Access

Background

"Welcome to Langley" signs and clusters of plum trees create distinctive entrances to the town on both the north and south ends. However, access to the Langley waterfront from the north is confused by several "SCENIC DRIVE" signs, which create an unclear sense of where the town is and how to approach it.

Recommendation

Directing traffic along Third Street until motorists reach Anthes Street, then down Anthes to the waterfront, would create a more clear and direct entry to the town. (See Figure 8) This would require removal of the Scenic Drive signs at Third and DeBruyn Streets, removal of the stop sign at Park Street and addition of a directional sign at Third and Anthes. Motorists could then drive uninterrupted to Anthes Street, turn left and be in town. The totem pole at the end of Anthes would provide a clear focal point and symbol of arrival in the downtown.

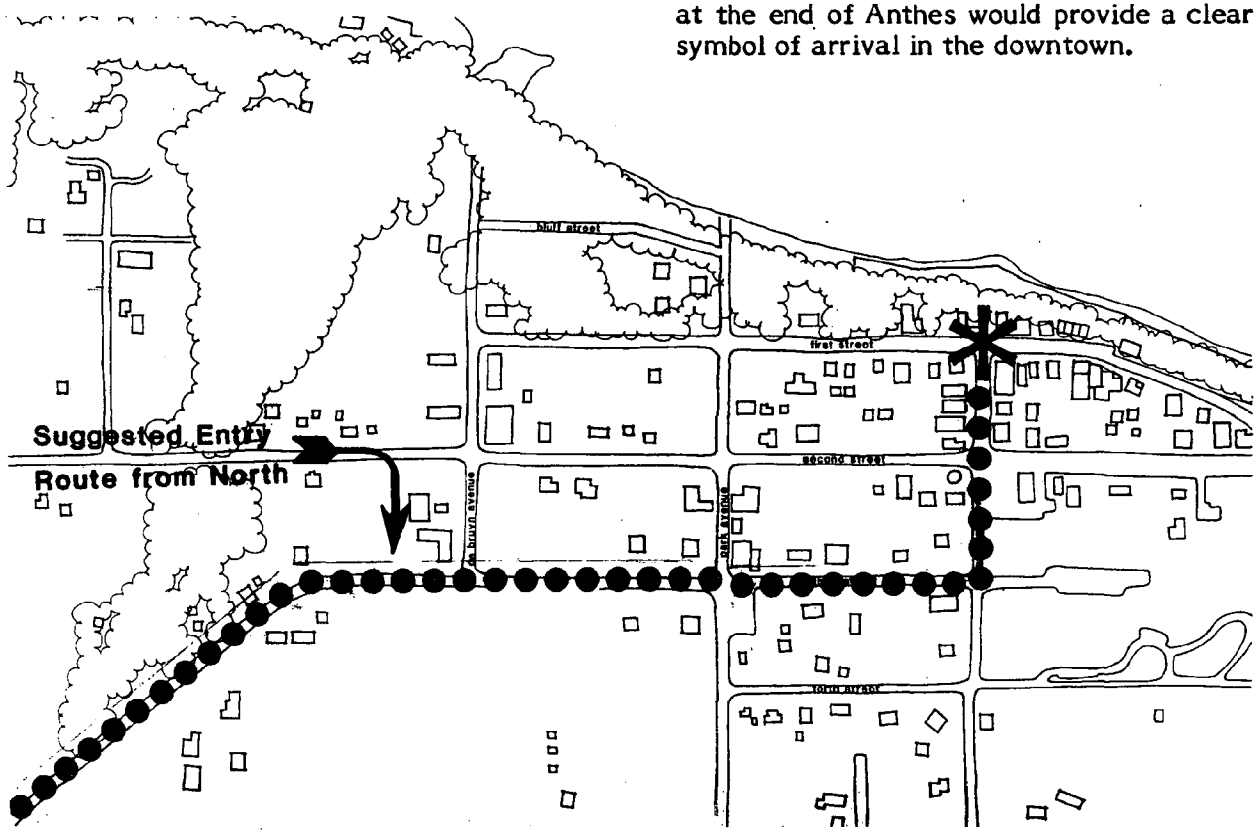


FIGURE 8. Town Entry

Land Use and Design 6

Background

The distinctive character of development in downtown Langley is one of the town's main attractions. Unlike many small, waterfront towns, Langley's historic waterfront has remained the heart of the community, bustling with business and cultural activity. One important reason for this vitality is that stores and services for tourists and townspeople are intermixed in the compact commercial core. Commercial zoning is, for the most part, concentrated in this area rather than spread extensively about town.

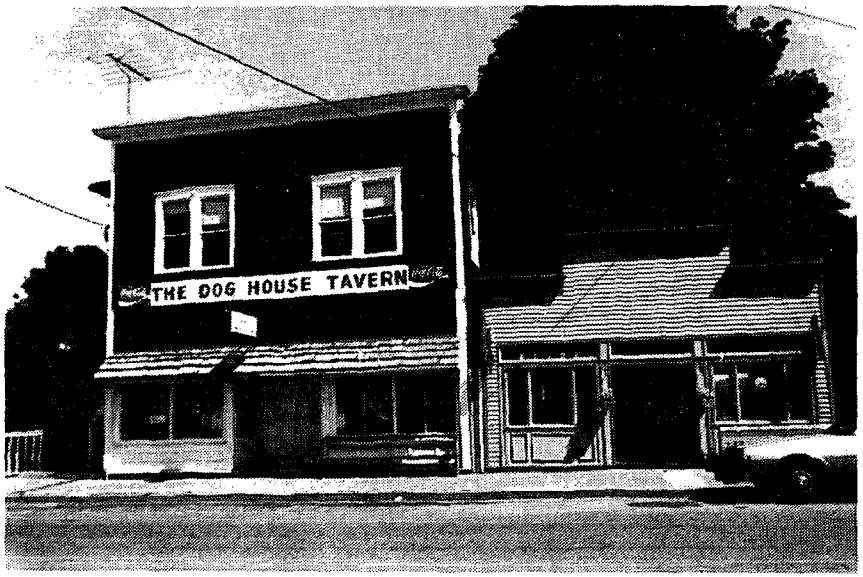
Langley has developed slowly over the years into a handsome small town that is described by visitors as quaint, pedestrian-oriented, individualistic, comfortable, scenic, quiet and diverse. The small scale of the downtown, and of individual structures, creates an attractive environment for the pedestrian making it possible to do business on foot rather than by car. The historic flavor of the buildings reinforces a strong sense of community identity and adds to the fun of window shopping along First Street.

These qualities are perhaps the town's most valuable assets, making the town an attractive place to live and to visit. Over time, the people of Langley have generally shown great care and respect for the town's special character in developing and upgrading buildings in the downtown. Although no major threats to these qualities are apparent at present, it is important to recognize and safeguard them in the future, especially when the economy picks up and development activity increases.

Recommendations

The compatibility of new development with the existing town character should be a consideration in the town's development approval process. For example, it should be the town's policy to discourage any future commercial rezones which would detract from the downtown core. There is one area currently zoned commercial -- along the shoreline east of the town dock -- which may warrant reconsideration because it is removed from the downtown, is currently used residentially, and is subject to the access limitations of Wharf Street. Requests for new commercial designations outside the downtown should be carefully scrutinized. The County's Shoreline Master Program should also be reviewed to determine whether its "Urban" designation for the entire Langley shoreline, which allows commercial and industrial uses, is consistent with the town's residential zoning and its goals for the waterfront.

It is also critical that new downtown development be of a design that is compatible with the style and scale of existing buildings. Yet it is virtually impossible to establish a set of rules that will guarantee continued "proper" development of the downtown area. There is a high degree of diversity among the existing structures, and individualism has been a key ingredient in the town's past success. Its future success will continue to be dependent on the care taken by individuals. However, some common characteristics of appropriate development can be identified.

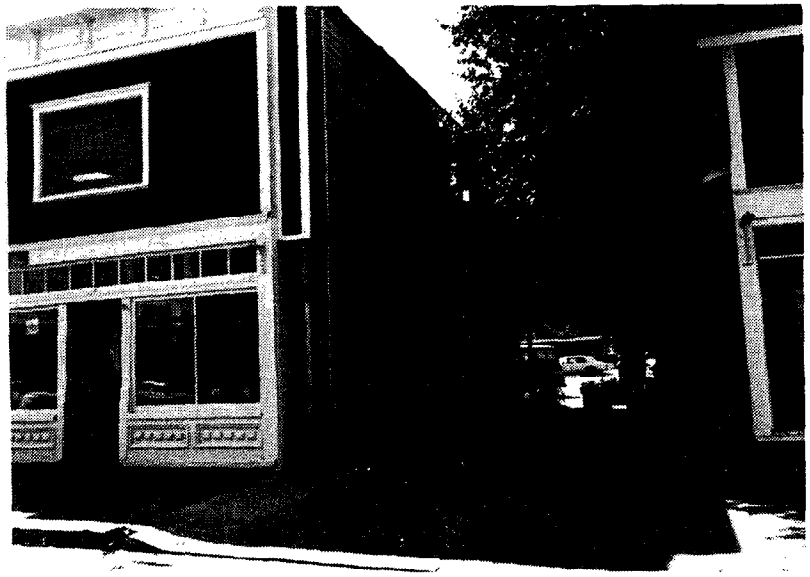


Characteristic Architecture on First Street

Following is a list of characteristics which, if followed, will reinforce the existing character of the town. At present, it may be sufficient to use them as voluntary guidelines, giving guidance to individuals building or remodeling structures in downtown. The town may want to consider establishing a simple design review process and adopting a set of flexible design guidelines to ensure that new development is compatible with and enhances the town's character. A number of small towns in the Northwest have implemented design review programs as a means of promoting tourism and economic revitalization.

Land Use

- Encourage the continued intermixing of tourist and local resident services in the "downtown core" of Langley.
- Continue to concentrate commercial development in the downtown, rather than spreading to outlying areas or highway approaches.
- Encourage ground floor retail uses with apartments or offices above.



Walkway Between First and Parking Lot Behind Shops

Street Character

- Retain and encourage interior pedestrian walkways between buildings, such as those connecting First and Second Streets through the parking lots.

- Increase street landscaping, courtyards, interior shops and offices, and planting among parking spaces.

- Retain and strengthen the pedestrian character of First and Anthes Streets. Add pedestrian improvements on Second Street.

Building Form

- Retain streetfronted shops with minimal setbacks, build to the sidewalk if possible and avoid parking between sidewalk and stores.

- Avoid steps leading into shops if possible to aid elderly or handicapped users.

- Encourage use of display windows on the street, awnings or overhangs for sun and rain protection, small flower boxes or gardens with flowering plants, benches, etc. to invite pedestrians and window shoppers.

- Encourage 1-2 story buildings of narrow to medium width and varying heights to create street interest.

- Encourage common architectural features, such as false fronts, often with stepped up edges, wood framed windows and banding or borders around windows.

- Paint doors, corners, and trim in a contrasting color; encourage two or three tone buildings for variety.

- Use wood siding, and small, painted signs.

- Encourage businesses on the north side of First Street to maintain windows in back, open to the water.

IV. FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the recommendations contained in this report will involve public agency participation at the local, state, and federal levels. Some of the recommendations will require changes in government policy or regulation, and many will depend on government funding. Because government funding is extremely limited at present, a spirit of public/private cooperation will be essential. The development of Sea Wall Park demonstrated the significant role which private interests can play in accomplishing public improvements in Langley. Many of the study recommendations are low-cost, small scale improvements which could be spear-headed by individuals or community organizations with minimal public funding. The proposed improvements will likely need to be staged over a number of years as funding becomes available and the public versus private costs are shared and adjusted accordingly.

Capital Improvements

Given the limited resources available today for public improvement projects, funding priorities must be carefully evaluated. It is recommended that improvements to address the First Street landslide near Wharf Street should receive the highest priority for funding. This problem is fast becoming a critical threat to the town's main street and, if not corrected, could seriously impact the historic waterfront. Engineering design, and implementation of measures to correct this problem are likely to be expensive, requiring outside funding.

Although funds are limited, several sources of grant funds or loans continue to be available. Competition for these funds will be stiff, however, and careful documentation of need will be required. It is also important that each application demonstrate "project readiness", or the town's ability to proceed quickly with a project. Potential funding sources for proposed improvements are summarized below:

- The federal Community Development Block Grant program continues to be the main source of funds available to local governments for financing public improvements. It is recommended that Langley include the initial phase of the First Street project -- engineering and design of measures to address the landslide problem -- in its 1983 Block Grant application. Other First and Second Street improvements could be pursued with supplemental funds from other sources, or in subsequent years. A special Block Grant fund allocated for "Imminent Threats", or emergency improvements, should be investigated in light of the critical nature of the landslide problem.

- The Economic Development Administration (EDA) has grant funds available for projects which are designed to create new jobs or prevent the loss of existing jobs. Since tourism is a key to economic development in Langley, a strong case could be made for funding any of the proposed projects to the extent that it would enhance tourist use and enjoyment of Langley's shoreline. To be in the best position to compete for these funds, Langley should develop and adopt an economic development strategy documenting the jobs potential associated with tourist growth in the town.

- The State IAC (Inter-Agency Committee) has traditionally been a prime source of funds for park and recreation improvements. Although funding is now at a reduced level, some grant funds are still available. The proposed improvements to Phil Simon Park and Sea Wall Park would be eligible for consideration.

- Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) offers long term, low interest loans for community facilities in rural areas. The maximum term of the loans is 40 years with an interest rate of 5% at present. This program has funded primarily sewer and water facilities in the past, but other critical public facilities are eligible.

- In addition to state and federal programs, there are several local financing mechanisms available. Langley could chose to utilize, following voter approval, general obligation bonds for proposed projects such as park improvements which would benefit the whole town. Another option is to form an L.I.D. (Local Improvement District) to assess specific properties for projects which will benefit them. An L.I.D. may be appropriate for the proposed improvements to Second Street, which would make the street more attractive for pedestrians and as a vehicular entry to the town.

- Community redevelopment financing is a further option which has been developed by the State Legislature. If this measure is approved by the voters of the state this fall, Langley would be able to sell bonds in the amount of projected property tax increases associated with capital improvements. As the increased taxes accrued, they would then be reserved for paying off the bonds. This option might be a useful one to consider for the proposed downtown improvements.

Private/Community Organization Efforts

Contributions by individuals and community organizations could go a long way toward constructing the recommended improvements. Individual businesses could, for example, donate needed landscaping and pedestrian amenities along Second Street at the time of development or business expansion. A community group could take on all or a portion of the proposed improvements at Sea Wall and Phil Simon Parks. Langley's downtown businessmen will have the primary responsibility for safeguarding and maintaining the historic character of the downtown waterfront. To date, it has been solely due to the care taken by private individuals that the town has retained its charm and character. Their continued commitment will be critical in the town's effort to preserve and enhance its shoreline.

Policy/Regulatory Actions

Several recommended actions involve City Council adoption of policies and development regulations rather than, or in conjunction with, the construction of physical improvements. These actions include: adoption of development regulations to insure safe building in the shoreline zone, land use policies to concentrate commercial development in downtown Langley, voluntary or required design guidelines to preserve the historic character of development in downtown, a plan for redirecting traffic flow to one-way on First Street, and an economic development strategy to strengthen the town's eligibility for EDA funds.

In sum, many of the recommended actions can be undertaken immediately within the existing resources of the town. Other improvements will require outside funding and will need to be staged over a number of years. As in the past, the future character and use of the shoreline will depend above all on the active concern and continued commitment of the people of Langley.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD No. 2333 PRINTED IN U.S.A.

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER LIBRARY

3 6668 14107 3876