

Ruston Shoreline Master Program Update

Shoreline Strategies/Community Visioning Report

November 2010

Background

Under the Town's Shoreline Master Program Update Public Involvement Plan and Ecology grant, one of the key steps in beginning the update process is to conduct public meetings to inform the public as well as obtain public input on desired uses of the shoreline. Accordingly, as part of the Shoreline Master Program update process, community visioning meetings were held on December 9, 2009, April 14, 2010, August 18, 2010 and November 10, 2010, hosted by the Town's Planning Commission.

Summary of SMP Update Meeting Comments

The format for each meeting has begun with an explanation of the Shoreline Master Program Update process as well as a status update as to the progress made to date. At the most recent meeting, the Town Planner explained that the recently completed Shoreline Inventory, Analysis and Characterization report had been sent to the Washington State Department of Ecology for review, (and that it is available for the public to view on the Town's website). After the brief SMP update overview and status report, the Planning Commission asked any interested members of the public if they had any questions or comments. From the meetings held to date, questions and comments received were primarily focused on the following items:

- 1) What is the overall timeline for completion of the SMP Update?
- 2) Will the SMP be consistent with the Point Ruston Master Development Plan?
- 3) Can the SMP include provisions for a deep water port for cruise ship docking?
- 4) Can the SMP include provisions for construction of a marina?
- 5) Can the SMP include provisions for a kayak launch?

The questions were addressed at the meetings when asked, and also included on a "Responses to SMP Update Questions and Comments" page which is located on the SMP update portion of the Town's web site (www.rustonwa.org – under "community development/planning/long range planning"), and also as provided below:

1) What is the overall timeline for completion of the SMP Update?

The Planning Commission is committed to working on the draft SMP document beginning in January 2011, until it is ready to send to the Department of Ecology for comment later in 2011. The remainder of the completion tasks will occur throughout the end of 2011, with adoption of a final SMP in 2012.

2) Will the SMP be consistent with the Point Ruston Master Development Plan?

The Planning Commission and staff do not anticipate any conflicts between the final SMP and the recently approved Point Ruston Master Development Plan (PRMDP). Future amendments to the PRMDP will be required to comply with the final SMP.

3) Can the SMP include provisions for a deep water port for cruise ship docking?

Yes. The Planning Commission has directed the staff to include provisions for a deep water port for cruise ship docking within the draft SMP.

4) Can the SMP include provisions for construction of a marina?

Yes. The Planning Commission has directed the staff to include provisions for marina construction within the draft SMP.

5) Can the SMP include provisions for a kayak launch?

Yes. The Planning Commission has directed the staff to include provisions for a kayak launch within the draft SMP.

Supporting Documentation

In addition to the input gathered at recent Shoreline Master Program update meetings, the Town has a number of other documents which provide guidance as to how the community expects to see its shorelines utilized, including the Town of Ruston Comprehensive Plan, Asarco Master Development Plan, and Point Ruston Master Development Plan.

As Ruston's shorelines are completely located within the Asarco Superfund Cleanup site, they have been a key topic in considering how the site was to be cleaned, and then later redeveloped. Beginning shortly after the Asarco plant closed and the clean up began, the Town of Ruston, City of Tacoma, and the EPA began the process of planning for the redevelopment of the site. At the local level, this process primarily involved adoption of a Town Comprehensive Plan with many goals related to the site, followed by review of the Asarco Master Development plan, which was later superseded by the Point Ruston Master Development Plan. Both plans underwent substantial environmental review through the SEPA process, followed by a number of public meetings to determine appropriate development plans for the site. What follows is a brief explanation of how each of these documents provides direction to us now as we begin drafting a much needed revision to the Town's shoreline regulations.

Town of Ruston Comprehensive Plan:

The Ruston Comprehensive Plan was originally adopted in 1996, and most recently updated in 2003 and contains a number of goals and policies related to use of the shoreline. As with any comprehensive plan, all goals and policies are based upon substantial public input. Key goals and policies from the plan that provide guidance for the Master Program update include:

Section 3.5 Overall Concept, Goal 1, pg 14 - *“A Master Planned Development (MDP) designation is established and applied to the Asarco Inc. property. Zoning controls and/or performance standards are established in the adopted Asarco Master Development Plan for uses and the following elements: site preparation and grading, building design, vehicular/transit/non-motorized access, storm drainage and erosion control, air pollution controls, landscaping, parking, noise control, lighting, signing, water quality, public access, view corridors and the use and disposal of toxic and hazardous materials.*

Section 3.5 Commercial Development Goal 2, pg 17 - *“Promote mixed commercial and residential development as part of the development plan for the Asarco property.”*

Section 3.5 Commercial Development, Goal 7, pg 17 - *“Design commercial development so that it is aesthetically compatible with surrounding buildings, significant historic properties, and natural features.*

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD), Goal 1, pg 18 - *“It is important to create a mixed-use development as part of a development plan within the Master Planned Development district to assure a strong tax base and proved employment and residential space.*

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD), Goal 2, pg 18 - *“Maximize the development potential of areas within the MPD designated for mixed-use in the adopted development plan.*

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD), Goal 3, pg 18 - *“Encourage the development of commercial and retail services needed to support mixed uses within the MPD.”*

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD), Goal 4, pg 18 - *“Promote safety and minimize nuisances associated with new development operations within the MPD by ensuring that mixed-use development complies with applicable local, state and federal regulations.”*

Section 3.6 Master Planned Development (MPD), Goal Summary, pg 19 - *“Development of the existing Asarco property is important to creating a strong tax base. These uses will have stringent development standards that would include: significant landscaping, screening of storage, maintenance and loading areas from building entrances and perimeter streets, discouragement of on-street vehicle loading, pedestrian and bicycle access to the waterfront, and compatibility with residential use on the same or adjacent sites.”*

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 1, pg 19 – *“Encourage development in areas where natural systems present the fewest environmental constraints and exercise responsible stewardship over natural resources and amenities.*

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 2, pg 19 - *“Encourage development that minimizes the adverse effects of development on the region’s marine and freshwater resources.”*

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 3, pg 19 – *“Maintain the visual quality of the town as seen from Puget Sound and public roads and provide scenic viewpoints within the town to Puget Sound”*

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 8, pg 19 – “Protect critical areas from inappropriate land uses, activities or development in order to ensure public health and safety.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 10, pg 20 – “Recognize that development on lands adjacent to designated shorelines, unless carefully regulated, can have significant adverse impacts on shoreline areas and jeopardize the intent of the Shoreline Management Act.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 11, pg 20 – “Shoreline resources should be preserved and protected. To the extent possible, shoreline areas will be reserved for water-dependent (marinas, small craft, cruise ships, fishing, etc.) and water-oriented uses (recreation, residential, restaurants, office, small shops, etc). Commercial, industrial and other uses that are not water-oriented will be encouraged adjacent to but not within the shoreline jurisdiction (200 feet from the designated shoreline).

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 12, pg 20 – “Preserve sensitive areas as passive open space where feasible.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 13, pg 20 – “Critical areas in the Town including wetlands, streams, ponds, shorelines, landslide hazard areas, seismic sensitive areas, fish and wildlife habitats, and potential mineral locations will be protected and preserved to the maximum extent possible as established by the Town’s Critical Areas Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 14, pg 20 – “All projects should consider alternatives to limit impacts on critical areas as much as possible.”

Section 3.7 Natural Features and Open Space, Goal Summary, pg 21 – “The Town will establish and maintain critical area protection through development and zoning regulations, which will preserve important natural features and open spaces, while providing clear guidelines for future development. Development adjacent to significant natural features such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes or view corridors will be regulated to protect environmental values, while recognizing that urban development is anticipated. Also, if the railroad were ever abandoned, some of the land it currently occupies should be maintained as a park or passive open space.”

Section 4.3 Housing Concepts, Goal Natural Features and Open Space, Goal 7, pg 26 – “Encourage housing as a part of a development plan within the Master Planned development to take advantage of views and proximity to water.”

Section 5.4 Transportation Concepts, Goal 5, pg 37 – “Recognize the role water-borne commerce has played in the Town’s past and will continue to play in its future due to Ruston’s unique proximity to deep, navigable water.”

Section 5.4 Transportation Concepts, Goal 8, pg 37 – “Encourage development of safe sidewalks, bikeways and paths as part of a non-motorized vehicular circulation system to provide transportation, enhance public enjoyment of natural areas and take advantage of scenic views.”

Section 5.4 Transportation Concepts, Goal Summary Excerpt, pg 38 – “The circulation system for the Asarco site has been determined as part of the Asarco Master Development Plan, and

should be coordinated with Ruston's existing streets and with Ruston Way in Tacoma. Realignment of the North 51st Street/Gallagher Way/Ruston Way connection should be coordinated with Asarco, the Environmental Protection Agency and the City of Tacoma, and should take into consideration the cleanup and subsequent development of the area. Pedestrian access to the water will be required as part of any development that occurs on the site."

Section 6.5 Parks and Recreation, Goal 2, pg 46 – *"Permit recreational use of tidelands, including public fishing, where such uses are consistent with the Town's Shoreline Master Plan."*

Section 6.5 Parks and Recreation, Goal 3, pg 46 – *"Protect and enhance the dominant natural features and open space structures (including viewpoints and view corridors), which characterize Ruston.*

Section 6.5 Parks and Recreation, Goal 4, pg 46 – *"Incorporate the parks and recreation provisions of the Asarco site Master Development Plan and obtain adequate funding to provide the additional recreation improvements."*

Section 6.5 Parks and Recreation, Goal 5, pg 46 – *"Cooperate with the Metropolitan Parks District in planning facilities related to the Asarco site and explore establishing working agreements to assist in planning, developing and maintaining parks in the Town of Ruston."*

Section 6.5 Parks and Recreation, Goal Summary Excerpt, pg 48 – *"Development of the Asarco site will provide public access to the water by extending the Ruston Way promenade across the entire shoreline and onto the peninsula. The final configuration of the access and related park areas will be determined as part of the development plan for the area."*

As the goals listed above represent substantial public input and planning, they will be carefully considered as drafting of goals, policies and regulations for the SMP update continues.

Asarco Master Development Plan (1997):

In 1997, the Town approved a Master Development Plan for the entire Asarco site, including shorelines. As the plan spanned the Tacoma-Ruston jurisdiction line, it was submitted to and agreed upon by The Town of Ruston, the City of Tacoma, ASARCO Inc, and Tacoma Metropolitan Park District. This plan, which was later superseded by the Point Ruston Master Development Plan, called for remediation of contaminated soils, buildings, and other structures, while also laying out a plan for development of residential and business land uses along the shoreline. As it relates to the SMP update, this plan involved substantial public input and required provision of public access to the shoreline where none had previously existed.

Point Ruston Master Development Plan (2009):

Over the past few years certain events have occurred that led to a change in ownership of the former Asarco site. With the new owner came the introduction of a new master development plan which is now known as the Point Ruston Master Development Plan. This plan, which also underwent significant review by the Tacoma and Ruston, included SEPA environmental review, and various public meetings related to the approval of the overall plan. During those meetings the public expressed their concerns and desires as they related to the redevelopment of the site. Primary concerns relating to the Shoreline

Master Program update included demands for public access to the water, installation of a trail connecting to Tacoma's waterfront trail system and Point Defiance Park, protection of water views, and environmental protection of the shoreline. The resulting plan, which has subsequently been approved, includes a 100' wide promenade connecting Point Defiance Park with the Tacoma waterfront with residential and hotel uses proposed adjacent to the promenade. Discussions also occurred which contemplated a marina and deep water port to serve possible cruise ship docking, but are currently not part of the approved plan. The plan was also found by the Planning Commission and Council to be consistent with the goals and policies of the Town's comprehensive plan. The site plan for the Ruston Master Development Plan is attached to this report for reference.

Conclusion

Although attendance at recent SMP update meetings has been low in comparison to the more recent Point Ruston project meetings, the Town has collected significant public input over the years through the various documents and development plans detailed in this report.

As the Town continues to move forward with the SMP update process, the Planning Commission intends to integrate the goals, policies and regulations from existing documents and approvals with any further comments received. As also stated on the Town website, comments or questions related to the Shoreline Master Program Update should be sent via e-mail to the Town Planner at rob@northcreekgroup.com . Answers to all questions will be posted on the SMP update response web page located on the Town's website at www.rustonwa.org .