

Transit-oriented Communities Come to Bellingham

Cathy Lehman, Futurewise Whatcom Chapter Director

Thanks to a small grant from the Community Food Co-op's Member Affairs Committee, Futurewise Whatcom worked throughout the summer months to bring a new smart-growth principle called Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) to Bellingham for local policy makers and the community to learn about and employ. The grant covered a two-pronged effort including a community forum called the Transportation Tailgate in July, and a traveling informational exhibit that will hang in Bellingham's City Hall throughout August and September.

Futurewise Whatcom is the local chapter of a statewide advocacy organization, Futurewise, which advocates for smart growth principles that promote healthy communities and cities while protecting farmland, forests, and shorelines today and for future generations.

The principles of TOC help us to think about land use and development in a manner that's good for both people and the planet, envisioning urban growth patterns that give people choices in housing and transportation by creating more mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods with excellent pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity. TOC allows more people to access homes, jobs, and community services without relying on personal vehicles, thereby reducing household transportation expenses and promoting better physical health. Additionally, they help us ensure long-term environmental sustainability and the conservation of natural resources by directing development away from working farms and forestlands, helping to protect food and fiber production, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

The community forum, Transportation Tailgate, held in partnership with Sustainable Connections' Green Building and Smart Growth Program, took place on a mild Saturday evening in

July at Bellingham's Parkade parking garage. About 150 folks brought their camp chairs to the top floor to view six short film clips on transportation issues and solutions such as physically separated bike lanes, increased parking turnover, downtown economic development, increased transit services, reduced parking incentives, and more. Panelists Ken Bothman (La Fiamma/Fiamma Burger), Bob Hall (Daylight Properties), Susan Horst (Smart Trips), Kyle Morris (The Hub Community Bike Shop), and Frank Ordway (Bellingham Transportation Commission) provided insights pertinent to local Bellingham issues between films, and Mallard Ice Cream and Boundary Bay Brewery's root beer floats capped the evening's festivities for folks to enjoy with the sunset over Bellingham Bay.

Additionally, a traveling visual exhibit consisting of more than 10 color panels on the details of TOC will hang in Bellingham's City Hall through the end of September. We hope as many citizens and policy makers as possible will stop by for a visit and check out the principles comprising TOC, which are set up visually like a transit map as the viewer follows details on the context for planning, evidence of benefits, types of areas that could benefit, how to measure the benefits, and more. The display was created by Futurewise, GGLO architecture firm, and the Transportation Choices Coalition. It has been in Spokane most recently and will travel to Tacoma next.

Thank you so much to the Community Food Co-op and their members for supporting innovating solutions like Transit Oriented Communities in OUR community! If we can utilize TOC principles for planning the next phase of our city's development, quite possibly our future in Bellingham will be even better than the current place we all enjoy.

Urban Beekeeping: A Hobby for the Honey-Minded

Kate Nichols

Imagine walking down a road in shorts and a tee-shirt surrounded by an ellipse of bees 15 feet across and 20 feet high and not getting stung. Beekeeper Michael Jaross had this very experience in Bellingham. Jaross, an avid advocate of urban beekeeping, has three hives in Fairhaven. All over Bellingham beekeepers, like Jaross, are raising bees for honey and pollinating.

May through July, gentle swarms are just one of the fascinating aspects of bees encountered by beekeepers. Living in the city requires a beekeeper to "be considerate of the neighbor's circumstances," acknowledged Patrick Knowles, vice president of the Mount Baker Beekeepers Association. A neighbor with an allergy to bees is the biggest concern. "But discerning the flight pattern so it doesn't interfere with the neighbor's world is important. Setting a hive about 50 feet from the neighbors should keep neighbors out of the bees' flight," Knowles said. "Most people won't even know there are beehives in a yard because the bee population disperses quickly as they move around looking for pollen and nectar." Bees will fly in a radius of about two miles in search of pollen.

Bees live busy, short lives. The queen bee lays an amazing 1500 to 2500 eggs a day. From gestation to when the bees fly away from the hive to die, is only nine weeks. A bee metamorphoses from an egg in three weeks. They "come out ready to work as house bees that do all the work of maintaining the hive," said Knowles. After three weeks as house bees, they spend the next three weeks of their life foraging for pollen, nectar, and water. To make one pound of honey, workers in a hive fly 55,000 miles and tap two million flowers, according to Maureen Dolan, NOVA Online's intern (www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bees/buzz.html).

Raising bees requires a small amount of equipment: a smoker, bee veil, gloves, and hive frames. Kits for start-up beekeeping cost as little as \$200, Knowles said. Although some beekeepers can catch a swarm and make their own frames for no cost, others will spend \$1000 for hives and equipment. In the 1900s beekeepers could order bees out of the Sears catalogue; presently many Whatcom County beekeepers mail order bees from Belleville Honey, a bee supplier in Burlington.

Even after the initial outlay of cash for bees, hives, and equipment, there are ongoing costs for medicine and



Hubertus Kohn is the leader of a group of local beekeepers who are raising queen bees that are uniquely adapted to Whatcom County (above).

Worker bee (female) gathering pollen from backyard Echinacea (left).

Photos courtesy of Michael Jaross

supplemental feedings in the spring and fall

of pollen patties and syrup. Knowles said the honey isn't profitable enough for most beekeepers. Honey needs to be looked at as "reaping the rewards of bees' success." Besides honey, a beekeeper needs a second part of his business to make it profitable—renting out hives for pollinating. In Bellingham there are people with fruit trees who call local beekeepers to bring over their hives to ensure their trees are pollinated. Whatcom County has several large commercial crops such as apples and raspberries that require rental bees.

This winter all the bees in Knowles' hives died. They might have had Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), Knowles said, which is a global issue that isn't fully explained; it happens when a beekeeper finds a "dead out," and all the bees have suddenly left the hive because of mites or disease. The biggest concern about CCD is the ecology of plant life. Knowles said, because without bees, there is no plant pollination. Urban beekeeping may be part of the solution to CCD, Jaross said, because there are fewer pesticides in small cities like Bellingham and there is more variety of flowers for pollination.

Anyone who wants to raise bees should check out the Mount Baker Beekeeper Association for advice and camaraderie in the fascinating world of bees (www.mtbakerbeekeepersassn.org).

Kate Nichols is a freelance writer who is passionate about food and community. She strives to eat organically and locally from Whatcom County's abundance of local food. Although sometimes she eats chocolate, bananas, and, of course, drinks coffee that is not grown locally, but is Fair Trade.

Volunteer Opportunities

Members who volunteer for Co-op activities or events receive one \$5 coupon each time they volunteer for 1/2 hour or longer. There are no openings for ongoing volunteer jobs at the present time, but sign up for volunteer email alerts, look for volunteer sign-up sheets for special events, or stop by the service desk to fill out a volunteer application.

Get on Our Volunteer Email List

If you're not already on the volunteer email list, please send your preferred email address to lauras@communityfood.coop. When you're on the list, you'll get an occasional update on volunteer activities with the Co-op. It's a great way to get involved with your Co-op and meet other members.

More Parties, Parties, Parties

We'll be hosting a few events at both stores during Co-op Month in October. We'll celebrate our 40th anniversary together with Member Appreciation Day, and we'll also host a children's activity for Halloween. Details will be sent to the volunteer email list.

Healthy Connections Cooking Class Assistant

Position varies from class to class, but generally involves food prep, serving food to class participants, and cleaning up during and after class. Cooking class assistants attend class for free and receive a coupon for store credit. Contact Kevin Murphy at 360-734-8158, ext. 220 or email kevinm@communityfood.coop.

Newsletter Distribution

Help distribute the Co-op Community News to locations in Bellingham and beyond. We have people helping with all routes, but still need backup. To sign up for a distribution route or to suggest possible distribution sites, please contact Laura.

Join the MAC

The Member Affairs Committee (MAC) meets every month, usually on the last Wednesday from 5:15–7:15 pm, to consider questions raised by our members and to work on board and community-based activities. If you are interested in joining the MAC, please call Jean Rogers at 360-734-8158.

Volunteer in the Community

Co-op members who volunteer with the Bellingham Food Bank, Small Potatoes Gleaning Project, Whatcom Land Trust, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, or The Food Bank Farm are eligible for a \$5 Co-op coupon. These organizations determine

how to distribute the set amount of coupons they receive each month. Check with the organization you're interested in before volunteering.

Contact Laura Steiger at 360-734-8158, ext. 129 or lauras@communityfood.coop.