



## York plan updates near conclusion

By Anne Mackie  
YNA President

York Neighborhood's proposed Plan Amendments were reviewed in a final work session by the City's Planning Commission August 18. The three-year planning process will culminate at a Public Hearing before the City Council Monday, Oct. 25 at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

### Area 9 rezone

The Planning Commission voted to not recommend approval for the Area 9 Ellis St. density rezone proposal. (See the "Q&A" article in this issue of the newsletter for more on this topic.) The Commission did agree to recommend a reduction of the height limit in Area 9 from 45' to 35'.

### Area 2 reduced parking overlay zoning

This proposal was partnered with the Area 9 rezone by the YNA; but the Planning Commission voted to move it forward without approving the Area 9 rezone. The YNA Board will recommend to the General Membership meeting, Sept. 22, that the Area 2 reduced parking proposal be withdrawn.

### Area 1 Whatcom Creek park proposal:

The Planning Commission supported the YNA's proposal for Area 1 Whatcom Creek property to be acquired for open space when ownership changes. Currently, the property is owned by the Bellingham School District and houses school buses.

### Area 7 Franklin Park:

The Planning Commission supported consideration for the city to vacate the Franklin Street right-of-ways in the property on the hillside above Franklin Park and in the trail berm in the 1200 block of Franklin St. It was the YNA's goal to have these properties redesignated as "open space," but a street-vacation can achieve our end goal of protecting these open spaces and newly created trails.

### Areas 4, 5, and 9:

Additional text revisions related to historic district designations for these areas of the neighborhood were approved.

Additional details about the status of the YNA's Plan Amendments and the upcoming City Council public hearing will be discussed at the York Neighborhood meeting Wed., Sept. 22, 7 p.m. at Garden St. Methodist Church.

*More on plan amendments on page 2 and 3*

## Annual Potluck Picnic

Sunday, Sept. 19

3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Franklin Park

- Free hot dogs and fixin's
- Music, a bike parade and face painting
- Build-your-own bird feeder table for kids
- Pie Raffle—bring a pie to donate, and/or buy a \$2 ticket to win a pie. Proceeds from the raffle will benefit the Bellingham Food Bank
- Most exciting of all, **York's first-annual Harvest Table**. Bring an item from the harvest from your yard—fruits, veggies, flowers, home canning, etc. These will be proudly displayed and then given as prizes to winners of the Harvest Walk.
- We will also be wishing a fond farewell to Mike the Mailman for most of the York neighborhood for many years. We will have a goodbye cake and a "mailbox" for mailing him goodbye notes.

### How the potluck works

- If your last name begins with A-H, bring a salad
- If your last name begins with I-P, bring a side or beverage
- If your last name begins with Q-Z, bring a dessert

## General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 22, 7 p.m.

Garden Street United Methodist Church

## IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEARING

- Bellingham City Council
- Hearing on York Neighborhood Plan Amendments
- Monday, Oct. 25, 7 p.m. at City Hall
- Attend and show your support for the YNA's plan amendments

## Pro's & Con's of the Ellis Street Rezone

Compiled by Anne Mackie

*From the written public comments to the Bellingham Planning Commission, August 18.*

**Sehome Neighborhood Board submitted a letter in support of the YNA's Area 9 rezone:** "Area 9, Ellis Street, consists mostly of beautiful homes with significant historic value, many of which have the same fine features found in the Sehome Historic District. We support the York Neighborhood's efforts to limit most infill in its historic areas to well-planned and design-reviewed projects, such as those that will be brought about by the Samish Way Urban Village, rather than remove beautiful existing structures."

### Against the rezone

"Area 9 should be left with the present density. That would allow those properties that need to be replaced be supplanted with the density levels that are appropriate to a transitional area. No large replacement has taken place from the inception of the current zoning to date. If more protection for historic structures is desired then allow business operations in said historic structures that would enhance their value even more and thus prevent their replacement. Problem solved." -- **Robert and Elizabeth Cunningham**

"I am NOT in favor of the proposal. I am a York resident, small business owner and responsible landlord. I appreciate the historic character of our neighborhood but feel strongly that preservation of historic character should never come at the expense of property rights." -- **Jon McGrath**

"Many argue that anything old must be preserved! Being old, to my knowledge is not history. Events, people and wars create history! If General Pickett had a secret mistress who once lived in the York neighborhood, this might qualify the house, not the entire neighborhood, for historical status." -- **Gary Richardson**

### In favor of the rezone

"Area 9 is as critical an area to the neighborhood as any other interior street like Grant or Franklin Streets, and the fact that it borders on a four-lane road doesn't mean that the homes should be devalued or torn down to accommodate growth. The greenest part of infill is keeping historic structures that already exist, protecting them and restoring them to their original luster." -- **Vale Bates**

"Thousands of hours by neighborhood representatives were spent on the promise/premise that the neighborhood could plan for its future, one that would impact and contribute not only to the neighborhood but also to a sense of history and economic development with the City and the State." -- **Kirsti Charlton**

"I am amazed at how a small number of landlords continue to have so much influence in this city. Our neighborhood continues to be held hostage by a very small number of rental owners who see the York as their own personal fiefdom for exploiting students and other low income individuals." -- **Gabriel Mast and Hana Schutz**

"Those opposed to the rezone are a small number of people who appear to be trying to protect their financial interests—they just want to make a buck. Sometimes we just have to look at the greater good and just not our pocket books." -- **Lesley Keenholts**

"Even after 120 years, these modest historic homes on small

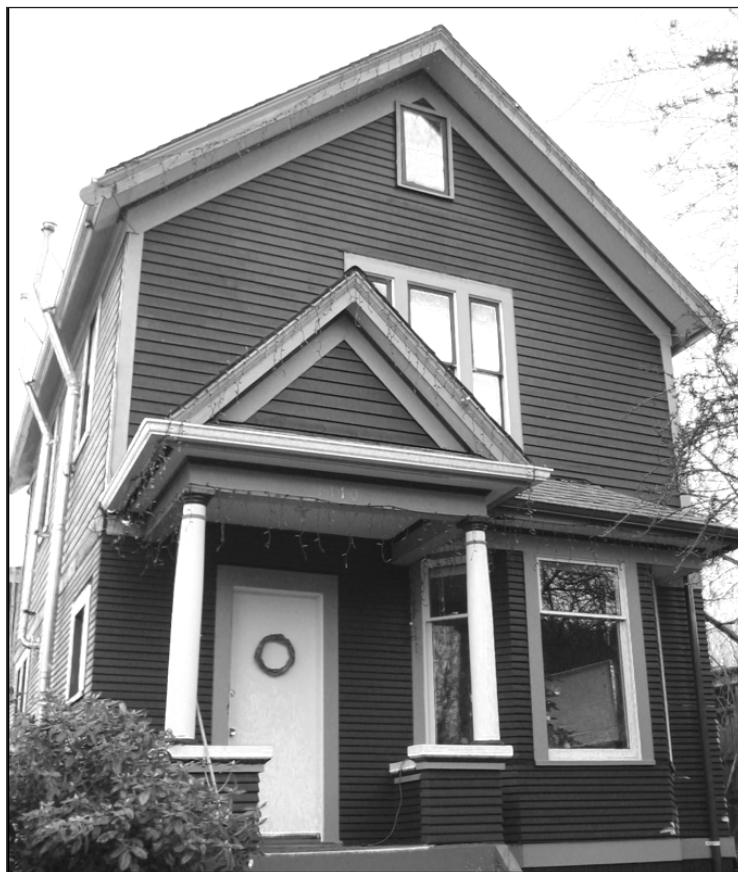


Photo by Anne Mackie

**Historic houses, like this one on the 1100 block, line Ellis Street.**

lots offer affordable housing to hundreds, provide a sense of history for the neighborhood and the city with a uniqueness of craftsmanship and quality construction that could not be replicated at this price point. The present zoning encourages continued speculation and depreciation that will eventually lead to their destruction, devaluing adjacent and abutting properties in this historic area." -- **Helen Jackson**

"Each neighborhood becomes part of the tapestry that makes Bellingham a beautiful place to live. We are doing our part for infill, yet we are being mindful to the quality of living and character of our neighborhood and want to be intentional about planning." -- **Lisa Anderson**

"York's proposal would still allow for increased population density in York Neighborhood and meet the standards of the state's Growth Management Act and comprehensive Plan of the City of Bellingham with its proposed rezone of Area 9." -- **Carrie Schwarz**

"The pre-WWII buildings along Ellis Street are effectively the 'front door' to the York Neighborhood National Historic District, and their loss to short-term speculation would be an embarrassment for Bellingham." -- **Dietmar Schwarz**

"Save what precious housing stock we have left for the sake of history, pride and heritage. Make strong what we already possess, and leave the patches of old to tell their proud stories to our children." -- **Carolyn Mulder**

"Four-story buildings along Ellis would diminish the quality of life for all who live nearby. Buildings of four stories would block the view and not be a good fit in our neighborhood." -- **Judy and David Hopkinson**

## Questions & Answers about the proposed Ellis Street rezone

By Anne Mackie

### Why was the rezone proposed?

In 2008 the YNA surveyed residents to help guide planning for the neighborhood's future. 96% of respondents said they favored York becoming an historic district and wanted to protect historic homes.

We found that Ellis Street's density (at 1,000 sq.ft. per unit) is inconsistent with the surrounding neighborhood (at 3,000 sq.ft. per unit), and this density has the potential to allow lot-combinations for the purpose of bulldozing homes to be replaced with four-story apartment and office complexes.

**How have conditions changed since 1980?**

The zoning for Ellis Street was established during an era when old housing was not valued. Today, national and state policies encourage protection of historic housing; and these homes – rather than having been bulldozed – provide affordable housing for hundreds of low to medium income residents and are part of an historic district.

**How is York's Area 9 an "historic district"?**

While many of the homes may appear to be in need of repair or a paint job, they still qualify for the U.S. Department of the Interior's standards for what constitutes a contributing property in an historic district because architecturally they have not been altered. 20 of the homes were built before 1909; 53 were built before 1930. These four blocks include architectural styles of Free Classical, Arts & Crafts, American Foursquare, Vernacular, Colonial Revival, Tudor, and Queen Anne Cottage.

### What would the rezone do?

The proposed change in density from 1,000 to 3,000 sq.ft. means fewer units could be incorporated into new structures. This means developers have less of an incentive to bulldoze and redevelop because they can cram in fewer



Photo by Anne Mackie

**A historic house on the 1400 block of Ellis Street also functions as a small business.**

units.

**How can the rezone help protect historic Ellis Street?**

The YNA's proposed rezone attempts to change the equation and make bulldozing less economically feasible and puts the emphasis on the value of the homes as part of an historic district. If the current zoning prevails and redevelopment occurs, homes that are left will be sandwiched between large, four-story new buildings; the architectural integrity of the historic district will be lost.

There are 18 homes in Area 9 that are owner-occupied. The majority of these home owners have submitted letters to the City in support of the YNA's rezone proposal.

**Is Ellis Street a good location for new infill construction?**

No. It is a historic district rich in architectural variety that should be maintained and improved. The single-car alley behind Ellis St. cannot accommodate traffic and congestion generated by new four-story office and apartment buildings.

Parking needs for this kind of intense development will over-burden the

already maxed-out adjacent residential neighborhood. Four-story structures will obstruct the views of homes along Franklin Street.

**Is there a place for new infill in York?**

Yes, the YNA proposes three sub-areas where infill could provide hundreds of new housing units and thousands of square feet of commercial space. These are Area 1 along Meador Avenue, Area 2 bordering downtown, and Area 8 in the Samish Way Urban Village.

**What tools can be used to encourage restoration of historic buildings?**

Many cities have implemented "adaptive reuse" strategies to encourage new uses and rehabilitation of historic buildings. This "green practice," of reusing already existing buildings for new purposes, is promoted by the State of Washington in its five-year historic preservation plan titled, "Sustaining Communities through Historic Preservation." \*

Toward the goal of advancing the environmental benefits of historic preservation, the YNA has proposed as part of the Area 9 rezone that new commercial uses be allowed on Ellis Street if housed in an existing historic structure. These uses include retail, eating establishments (limited to corner lots), artist studios, offices, personal services such as barber and beauty shops, bed & breakfasts and similar uses as listed here.

The "multi-family" use designation of Ellis Street, as it exists today, would not change; legal rooming houses, duplexes, or triplexes would continue to be allowed.

Recommended reading:  
"Sustaining Communities through Historic Preservation," from the Washington State Dept. of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. It can be found at:  
<http://www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/Documents/documents/PreservationPlan09.pdf>

## Topic for York Sept. 22 meeting

Community Energy Challenge:  
A Whatcom County Green Jobs  
and Energy Efficiency Program

By Shawn Collins

The Community Energy Challenge is an initiative to reduce consumption of electricity and natural gas by making energy efficiency affordable, accessible, and attractive for businesses and households throughout Whatcom County.

The Community Energy Challenge makes achieving energy efficiency as easy as possible from start to finish. We provide each participating household and business with quality information, a full energy assessment, a customized energy action plan detailing cost-effective measures, assistance with utility and tax rebates, attractive and accessible financing opportunities, reliable contractors, and quality assurance.

More information about the Community Energy Challenge can be found at [www.communityenergychallenge.org](http://www.communityenergychallenge.org) or by contacting:

Shawn Collins  
Community Energy Challenge Manager  
[shawn\\_collins@oppco.org](mailto:shawn_collins@oppco.org)  
(360) 676-6099

## Donate your furniture

Lisa Hust at Whatcom Volunteer Center

Donate your time or furniture to the House 2 Home Network Virtual Furniture Bank! The furniture bank serves people who were recently homeless and acquired housing through housing case management.

House 2 Home is unique because it does not have a warehouse. Instead, volunteers pick items up from donors and deliver them to customers' new homes. The furniture bank accepts furniture such as beds, couches, chairs, dining tables, desks and more in good condition. If you would like to volunteer to deliver or donate furniture, contact the House 2 Home Network at (360) 224-7185.



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## Historic signs sprout in York



Photo by Anne Mackie

By Anne Mackie

Home owners in York are beginning to adorn their properties with signs that indicate their home's heritage, building date, or original owner's name. The yellow church at 1446 Franklin St., now a residence owned by Judy and Dave Hopkinson, is one of the neighborhood properties contributing to the York National Historic District designation.

Signs are made by Signs Plus for less than \$40. More information about the sign projects will be discussed at the upcoming meeting of York's Historic Preservation Committee, Sunday, Oct. 10, 7pm, at Chair Don Hilty-Jones' home, 1316 Franklin St. Newcomers are welcome!



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## Go MADD at Franklin Park

By Helen Jackson

Make A Difference Day (M.A.D.D.) is coming to Franklin Park. Mark Saturday, October 23, from 9 a.m. to noon on your calendars now. Be there to meet, greet and get to know the generous volunteers from all over Bellingham who will be here to add new plants and trees to the Park and hillside.

We'll be planting many new native trees, including Douglas and Grand Fir, Garry Oak, Madrone and Cascara on the hillside. Hundreds of plants, shrubs and bulbs will add variety and color to Park beds and the hillside.

Please bring your gloves and shovels.

If you would like to help provide snacks for volunteers, please contact Helen Jackson at # 656-5467 or email: [hjaxon817@yahoo.com](mailto:hjaxon817@yahoo.com)

## Seeing Stars?

Have you recently noticed any new stars in the neighborhood? Well, York has about 8 or 10 new ones that you may have seen proudly displayed on front lawns.

The stars were earned by pre-school and elementary school children this summer through a reading program sponsored by the Bellingham Public Library. Super Star status was earned when the children read (or were read to) a certain number of books this summer.

Congratulations to all these kids! (And to their parents or other adults for supporting the kids in this endeavor.) Reading is good.

### Want to advertise in The Yorker?

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## Mike the Mailman says farewell



Photo by Anne Mackie

Greetings Yorkers. I wanted to let you know that I'll be leaving the neighborhood after 20 years. My foot bothers me too much, so I'll be taking a driving route. It's been a pleasure getting to know many families, college students and business people over the years. Thanks for all the memories. Hope to see you at Nelson's sometime.

- Mike Valenti, aka "Mike the Mailman"



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### York Neighborhood Association Donation

- Students \$5
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- Business \$100 (includes business-card-sized ad in each issue of the Yorker)

### Projects Donation

(to be used specifically for the project marked below)

- Franklin Park Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Rock Hill Park Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Historic Preservation Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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### Return form to:

YNA Treasurer  
520 Edwards St.  
Bellingham, WA 98225

**Thank you for your support!**

### Contact the YNA Board

#### President

Anne Mackie: [president@yorkneighborhood.org](mailto:president@yorkneighborhood.org)

#### Vice President

Kirsti Charlton: [vicepresident@yorkneighborhood.org](mailto:vicepresident@yorkneighborhood.org)

#### Treasurer

Lisa Anderson: [treasurer@yorkneighborhood.org](mailto:treasurer@yorkneighborhood.org)

#### Secretary

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#### Newsletter Editor

Chris Collison: [chrisgcollison@gmail.com](mailto:chrisgcollison@gmail.com)

## MNAC continues to serve neighborhood

By Kirsti Charlton  
YNA Vice President and MNAC Rep.

The Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission, MNAC, is one of many City of Bellingham commissions whose members are Bellingham residents, our friends, and our neighbors. The Mayor of Bellingham, upon the recommendation of the neighborhood associations, appoints members, one for each of the 24 neighborhoods in the city, to a two-year term.

Linda Stewart, Neighborhood Services Coordinator, and assistant, Tracy Lewis, Mayor's office, coordinate MNAC monthly meetings and activities. The meetings are open to the public. Minutes of meetings and other related MNAC information are found at the City of Bellingham website: <http://www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/resources/index.aspx>

### Recent agenda items have included presentations on:

- Neighborhood block watch program
- Viking Community Builders (a WWU student club)
- Project DX for Bellingham (a program to improve water quality on individual properties)
- 2010 Census Preview and strategies
- Resources and Information for Washington State Non-Profits

MNAC also is involved in the plan amendment process, having last year (2009) formulated a process by which an MNAC sub-committee reviews all plan amendments, and makes a recommendation to docket (bring to City Council for its consideration). A recommendation to docket does not necessarily mean MNAC support for approval, only for consideration.

## Neighborhood Faces Outstanding Volunteer Ron Barnett



Photo by Chris Collison

By Helen Jackson

York neighborhood volunteers have enjoyed Ron Barnett's sense of humor, artistry and hard-working dedication to the Franklin Park hillside and island projects over the past four years. Many more have enjoyed his contribution without ever meeting him.

There have been almost 50 Work Parties to restore the open areas surrounding Franklin Park, and Ron has been present at most of them. He's been there mulching, weeding, pruning, planting, digging, laying gravel and helping to install benches and signs.

He is known in these parts as the 'Trail Blazer.' After enough invasive plants, trees and heaps of trash were removed to be able to see land, he individually dug out the Franklin Trail from the playground to Lakeway Drive. All those gently sweeping curves around slopes and stone were his creation. Feeling like a shovel belonged in his hands, he then turned back to our hillside trail from Whatcom Street to the playground, greatly improving it.

Ron is happy to see people out enjoying these open areas he has helped improve. We're just happy he lives in our neighborhood. Thank you, Ron.

## Kids Corner Letterboxing in Rock Hill Park

By Carrie Schwarz

A letterbox has been hidden in Rock Hill Park, and it is waiting for you to discover it. What is a letterbox you ask? It is a hidden box containing a special stamp and notebook. All you need to do is follow the clues and instructions to locate the box. Once you have located the box, you can use the stamp in the box to make a stamp in your own blank notebook (or blank piece of paper). You can also bring along your own special stamp to make a stamping inside the notebook that is found in the box. Once you have found this location, you can collect more stampings in your letterboxing notebook by visiting the many letterboxing sites around Bellingham. You can find these other sites at this website: <http://www.letterboxing.org/BoxFind.php>

You can learn more about this fun activity at: <http://www.letterboxing.org>  
Happy Letterboxing!

### Instructions

- Bring along a little notebook (or blank sheet of paper) and a stamp of your own (either bought or handmade).
- Follow the clues to find the hidden box.
- Once located, stamp your stamp into the notebook in the box and then stamp the stamp in the box into your own notebook.
- Put back materials in container and place the container back where you found it (making sure that it is hidden).
- Clues
- Start at the playground at the bottom of Rock Hill Park. Locate the stairs and head up the hill. At the top of the hill turn left on the path and hop on your right foot along the path.
- Before you reach the road turn right again (now heading towards the I-5 wall) and hop along on your left foot toward the wall. Stop when you are near an object that can provide you with light outside in the nighttime. At the base of this object, under some woodchips, you will find the letterbox!

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# Neighborhood Calendar of Events

## York Annual Picnic

Sunday, Sept. 19, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
At Franklin Park

## General meeting

Wednesday, Sept. 22 at 7 p.m.  
Garden St. United Methodist Church

## Recycle and Trash Society

Every first and third Saturday of  
the month at 8:45 a.m.

## YNA Board meeting

Wednesday, Oct. 13, 7 p.m.  
Garden St. United Methodist Church

## "Make a Difference Day" Franklin Park Work Party

Saturday, Oct. 23, 9 a.m. to noon

## City Council Hearing on York Plan Amendments

Monday, Oct. 25, 7 p.m.  
at City Hall

## Thank you for your continued support!

Thank you to these residents who donated since the publication of the last issue of The Yorker:

Judy Frane, Anne Mackie and Jon Ostby

Always a HUGE THANK YOU to Garden St. United Methodist Church for their continued support of the York Neighborhood Association by providing free meeting space.

### York Neighborhood Association

c/o 1351 Humboldt St  
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