



PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
Heidi Gudde, Planning Director  
(360) 354 - 5532

## Planning Department Memorandum

**To:** City Council  
**From:** Heidi Gudde, Planning Director  
**Date:** August 19, 2019  
**Re:** Regional Wayfinding Sign Program Presentation and Funding Strategy

This memo and attached information are meant to provide more information to the City Council regarding a proposed County-wide Wayfinding Sign Program which will be presented at the August 19<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

The design of the project has been headed by the Bellingham Whatcom Tourism Office under the direction of Sandy Ward. The consultant behind the work, Merje, specializes in designing wayfinding sign systems. As part of the regional system, Lynden will be given a detailed sign menu which is unique to the City. This program includes gateway indicators, vehicular wayfinding signs, and pedestrian signs within the downtown core.

**Wayfinding Defined:** Wayfinding signs are geared specifically toward assisting visitors to the City of Lynden and its attractions. This is more than a courtesy, studies indicate that visitors are open to



*Downtown Front Street*



*Guide Meridian sign*



*East Grover Street*

extending their stay or expanding their activities when visiting a region if they become aware of additional activities. These extended stays contribute to the local economy. The City of Lynden currently has a mix of signs and sign types which are used for wayfinding. As shown here, these signs tend to be inconsistent and usually undersized for their location.

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**Benefits of Wayfinding:** A sign program which is consistent and regional in nature will give visitors to Whatcom County cohesive points of navigation. Small cities within Whatcom County recognize that their own local attractions, such as the Pioneer Museum or the Homestead Golf Course, are likely not the sole reason for visiting the County. However, one activity leads to another and consistent wayfinding provides visitors with information about attractions and the confidence to find them.

In Ashville, North Carolina, 11% of the visitors surveyed said they would spend at least one additional night in the area if they discovered more areas and attractions to visit. And, Camden, New Jersey has seen a 30% increase in visitation since installing their wayfinding system.

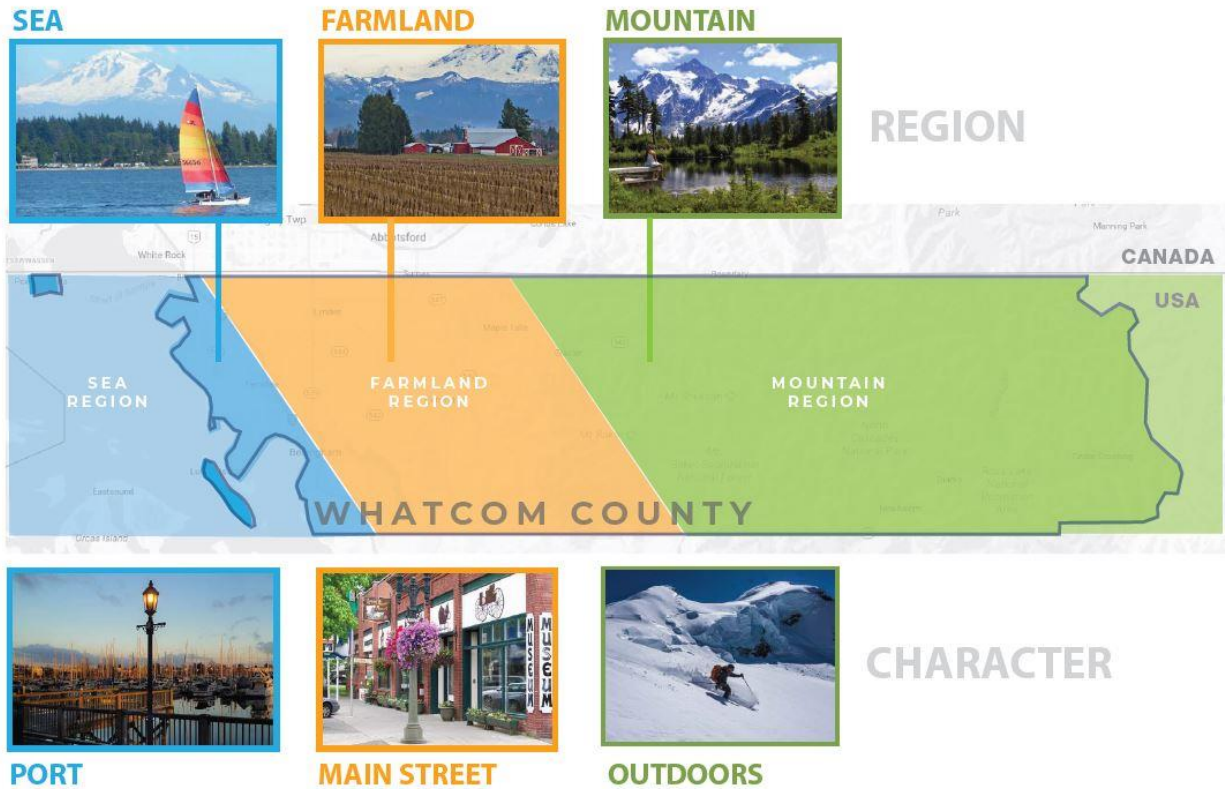
**Project Scope:** The Bellingham Whatcom Tourism Office has been working diligently with the consultant, Merje to develop a regional wayfinding sign program for all of Whatcom County. The Tourism Office has invited participation from local jurisdictions, tribes, the Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT), and the City's Chamber of Commerce. The Community Development Committee has seen preliminary drawings and schedules for this plan in the past.

For the scope of this project, attractions that are featured on the signs must meet a specific criterion in order to be listed. This criterion can generally be described as attractions which are public, quasi-public, recreational, provide general shopping or dining opportunities, or provide lodging accommodations. Community facilities and specific businesses are not listed unless they meet the criteria outlined in the sign program.

Coordination is critical as the proposed sign program is regional in nature. The model used, in the case of Whatcom County is one that provides for consistency in size and type of signage but recognizes the individuality of each region and jurisdiction within the County. The program generally divides Whatcom County into the coastal region, the farmland region, and the mountain region.

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Each of these regions have an icon that is used for unincorporated areas and each municipal jurisdiction and tribal region has an icon specific to their identity. The inspiration for these icons is the vintage labels which graced the steamer trunks and luggage of world travelers.

The icons are also highly reproducible and could be used for marketing materials such as brochures, t-shirts, coffee mugs, websites, etc. The icon is not intended to replace a City's municipal seal or logo.



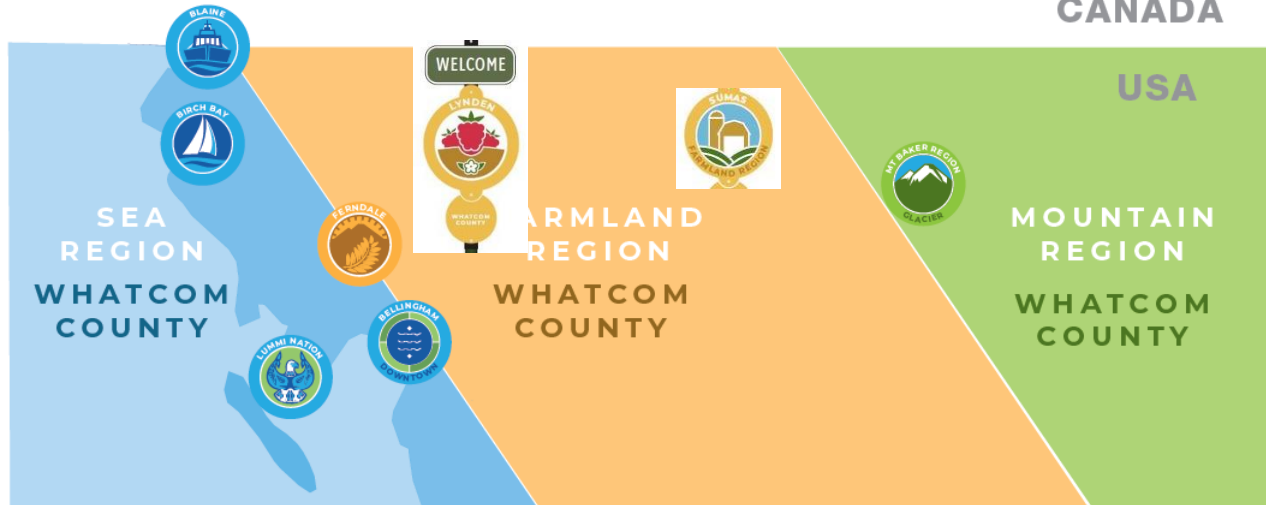
The icon proposed for Lynden is the result of a number of iterations. The consultant focused on the connection to the agricultural region with the raspberries, and a nod toward the flower baskets on Front Street with the depiction of a basket shown with basket weave pattern. There is also a version of the icon without a basket weave features a flower. No matter which icon is used, it is critical that it is graphically simple and easy to read even from a vehicle.

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The proposed sign program uses consistent imaging and reflective surface. Signs are sized according to location, audience, and traffic speed. It is also designed to be a kit of parts which means panels can easily be replaced or exchanged without the need to replace an entire sign.

The final deliverable from Merje and the Tourism office will be a sign package that will include enough detail to go out to bid and seek permits from WDOT as needed.



**Project Status:** In June the consultants traveled throughout the City of Lynden to refine the plan for potential sign locations. This resulted a few signs which could be eliminated, some relocated to better positions, and some reduced in size. The proposed locations, which do not show the most recent changes, are include in the attached Programing Message Schedule.

Changes which resulted from this on-site “truthing” are reflected in the attached budget by a reduction of approximately \$60,000 from what was originally drafted.

**Funding:** The draft budget and funding strategy is attached. County Executive, Jack Louws has expressed support for the plan which would include EDI funding and an interlocal agreement to ensure consistency and a long-term maintenance plan to address sign revisions or damage. City staff is proposing that the Lynden package be funded with EDI Grant and EDI loan which would be repaid with Hotel/Motel tax funds. Costs shown in the attached strategy could potentially be reduced by the elimination of signs from the package, the use of wooden posts, and in-house installation for signs located within the City.