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A Brief History

The Happy Valley neighborhood, which covers over 627 acres, was founded around the same time that Fairhaven was founded in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It is located at the foot of Sehome, Samish, and South Hill (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). Its first residents were mostly employees of the Fairhaven Cedar Mill and the Bellingham Salmon Cannery, both located in Fairhaven (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). In 1903, Fairhaven and the two neighboring cities voted to become one which is what we now know as Bellingham, WA (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). There used to be a streetcar that connected the residents of Happy Valley to downtown Fairhaven, of which there is still evidence along Harris St. Over the years the neighborhood, which started out as single family homes located mostly in the southern section of the neighborhood with larger garden tracts located throughout the rest of the valley, has turned into a diverse neighborhood.

With the addition of Western Washington University located on Happy Valley's northern borders apartment buildings started going up in the neighborhood's northern section in the 1960s (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). While these apartments replaced a number of single family homes it also provided affordable housing for residents, including the growing number of students calling Happy Valley home. The southern section of the neighborhood is still mostly populated with single family dwellings, making the diversity of this neighborhood grow. While the growth in Happy Valley has been great, there are still areas of undeveloped land where you can see wildlife living among the other neighborhood residents (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005).

Western is located on its northern border just outside of Happy Valley, there are three public schools located in the neighborhood. Sehome High School is located on the

northern border, and both Larrabee and Happy Valley Elementary schools are located in the neighborhood (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). For middle school, children are bused a short ride away to Fairhaven Middle School located to the southwest and to outside the boarder. In addition to the three public schools there are also numerous private schools and daycares located within the boarder of Happy Valley offering parents choices when making decisions about their children's education.

Within its borders, Happy Valley still has a community garden and the Connelly Creek Nature Area and Trail, with Connelly creek running the length of the neighborhood (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). Connelly Creek Nature Area is 34.3 acres within the neighborhood, which is owned and maintained by the City of Bellingham's Parks and Recreation Department (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). Both are located within walking distance from most residents and provide an escape from the developed areas surrounding the neighborhood. This area allows residents of all ages an escape from the density of other areas into nature without traveling too far from their homes. There is one other park which was built in 1998 named Happy Valley Park. The three schools located within its borders offer 15 acres of playgrounds and fields for the use of the neighborhood when school is not in session (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005).

Getting the necessary items for life is easy when it is all located within the neighborhood borders. Shopping within the neighborhood is not limited to one or two choices: there is Sehome Village which contains many different restaurants, a pub, two different doctors' offices; Rite Aid, Haggens, REI and a movie theater. On the southern end, there is another grocery store and a liquor store. Also, there are a few little corner stores located within the heart of Happy Valley for those last-minutes items or quick treats. Hillcrest Church offers a daycare and a before-and-

after-school program that is both affordable and convenient for many families living in Happy Valley. For many single-family residents this is just a walk away from home or a short drive on your way to work.

While Happy Valley still has many single family homes, the average age of its residents is 22, with the largest population between 20 and 25 years old (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). This is the result of the apartment building located in the northern section that houses hundreds of college students. The dominant race is Caucasian equaling over seventy-five percent of the population (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). The neighborhood's average dollar amount paid in rent is slightly lower than the rest of Bellingham; which is consistent with the average household income being \$17,000 a year less than the Bellingham average. This would be explained because: the majority of the population are college students, couples who are not married and do not have children, and a higher percentage of young married couples (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). The demographics of Happy Valley are consistent with that of a neighborhood whose majority of the population are university students.

While majority of the population are college students there is still a neighborhood association at work within Happy Valley. The Happy Valley Neighborhood Association partners with Our Savior's Lutheran Church to put on free community meals every fourth Sunday of the month from 5 pm to 6:30 pm. This is a place where the hope is to allow the residents to get to know others that they might not otherwise have the chance to meet, and to help create the sense of community within the neighborhood (Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005). The neighborhood association is made up primarily of members of the neighborhood who are not students at Western Washington University; its members are of middle age. The neighborhood value and mission statement created states that by 2020 Happy Valley will be "a human scale

residential neighborhood which contains its stability and diversity by preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat; controlling density, light and noise; emphasizing open space and gardens; prioritizing efficient transportation options; and cultivation of community opportunities.”

(Happy Valley Neighborhood Plan, 2005)

Assets Map (See Appendix A)

Assets Explanation (See Appendix B for Photos)

Restaurants

- Mi Casa Taqueria
- Super Duper Burger
- Busara
- Robeks
- Qqli
- Espinoza’s
- Oishi Teriyaki
- Keg Steakhouse
- Pizza Time
- Pho 99

All of the restaurants mentioned above, and some that are not included on this list, are assets to the Happy Valley neighborhood. These restaurants not only provide a place to eat for community members and other city residents, but they also act as social meeting places for the community members to come together and interact. Some of the more active restaurants even give back to their neighborhood by donations of food or resources to local businesses and events.

Grocery Stores

- Sehome Haggens
- Food Pavilion

Sehome Haggens and Food Pavilion, recently (renamed The Market at Fairhaven) are huge assets to the Happy Valley neighborhood. Both grocery stores close and easily accessible to residents; these stores provide many products to the Happy Valley Neighborhood residents.

Convenience Stores

- JJ’s In & Out
- Super Store

The convenience stores are included on the asset maps because they provide the community with local and sometimes closer access to products when they are only looking to purchase one or two things. Friends, families or individuals can usually walk to these locations.

Schools

- Bellingham Cooperative School
- Blossom Childcare & Learning Center
- Wellspring Community School
- Larrabee Elementary School
- Samish School
- Happy Valley Elementary

All schools, be they preschools, elementary schools, middle schools, or high schools, are considered vital assets to any community. Happy Valley Neighborhood is lucky enough to have six educational institutions within its boundaries. These schools provide the younger community members with education, social interactions, and safe and fun places to learn and play. Schools give a lot back to a community through their many community service projects, special events, and connections that are built among each other.

Churches

- Hillcrest Church
- Our Saviors Lutheran Church

Religious institutions provide places for individuals to worship the God that they believe in, they also provide community space to socialize and interact with your neighbors. Specifically in the Happy Valley Neighborhood, Our Saviors Lutheran Church hosts the monthly community potluck. This event is meant to bring the community together to share a meal and meet new people. Both Hillcrest and Our Saviors Lutheran Church also offer support groups, worship services, and they are both also highly involved in the community. These two organization are assets to the community in that they are bringing individuals together and trying to do good within the neighborhood.

Movie Theater

- Sehome regal cinemas

The Regal Cinemas movie theater in Happy Valley provides community members with a form of visual entertainment. The movie theater can also be place to socialize and gather with a group of friends to enjoy a relaxing form of entertainment.

Public Natural Area

- Connelly Creek
- Happy Valley Park

The natural public areas within the Happy Valley Neighborhood are huge assets to the community. Both Connelly Creek and Happy Valley Park provide outdoor space to play, relax, spend time with friends, read a book, and so much more. Both of these areas could be considered a third space within the community.

Fire Station

The fire station that is located within the Happy Valley Neighborhood borders is important because if an emergency was to occur then the fire department would be able to respond quickly. The location of this fire station brings a sense of safety to the community and would then be considered an asset.

Interview Summaries

Karen Tolliver is the principal of Happy Valley Elementary. The school is an integral part of the Happy Valley neighborhood as 471 of the 500 students live within a two-mile radius of the school. Although Tolliver does not live in the neighborhood, she has continuous contact with the neighborhood and especially with the neighborhood association. When asked what the strengths of the neighborhood were Tolliver said, “The community involvement. Members of the neighborhood come and volunteer at the school. We have over 30 interns from Western each

quarter – many of which live in the area. Other neighbors and parents come in on a regular basis to volunteer as well.”

The school also gives back to the neighborhood. Right now students are learning about salmon reproduction by hatching eggs. When the fish are ready to be released, the students will be placing them in the local creek. Every year, members of the neighborhood association come in to talk with students about recycling. They then split the students into groups and take them out around the neighborhood to collect litter. Tolliver believes that this allows the children to feel involved and empowered to take care of their neighborhood.

There is a need within the community for a safe walking path for the students to get to school. The Bellingham School District does not provide bus transportation for students who live within a one-mile radius of a school. With many students living so close to the school, parents have to drive their children to school. Those students who are not receiving rides are forced to walk on the shoulder of the road. The school and neighborhood association are looking into ways to put in crossing signs and sidewalks to make the trip to school much safer for students.

Overall, Karen Tolliver believes that the neighborhood is very community minded and has been willing to invest in the school. “By having so many people involved in our school, it shows the children that adults in their community truly care about them and the role they play in making the neighborhood better” (Karen Tolliver, personal communication).

From interviewing Molly McCoy, we learned the perspective of a college student in Happy Valley other than own. McCoy felt the major strengths in the community were the positive attitudes of people. She said she feels Happy Valley has a lot of open-minded people and, therefore, an unspoken sense of harmony seems to exist. She felt there isn’t really a good meeting space for the community, but said she may be unaware if one exists. As far as needs go,

McCoy felt there was a lack of collaboration and fellowship among the various groups of people. There are college students, lower-income families, middle-class families and some upper-class families; she felt they were all separated into their particular groups

Our third interviewee was also a college student. Jamie Carter had a slightly different opinion than McCoy. Carter felt one of the strengths of Happy Valley was the way it looks. She felt the neighborhood was well-manicured and the majority of the residents kept their property in good condition. Carter felt the only meeting place was the convenience store on the corner of 21st Street and Harris Avenue. This is because she felt she always ran into other college students there. She also mentioned Starbucks at Bakerview, but said it wasn't really a "quaint" place for meeting others just from Happy Valley. More amenities within the neighborhood were what Carter considered a need for Happy Valley. She suggested more stores and/or restaurants for the community.

Carlos Traner is a neighbor of Meg McCoy. He felt the strengths for the residents within Happy Valley were that we are all granted the ability to grow beautiful gardens and share with neighbors and friends. He also said the ability to walk and bike all over the place, since it's not too far from downtown and the bay. Traner said he also feels it's a kind and quiet area where there is not a lot of noise or disturbance. The Firehouse Café was Traner's choice for a meeting place in Happy Valley. He said most locals can go there to grab a cup of coffee and meet a friend. Traner feels Happy Valley needs more opportunities to connect with neighbors (if you want to). He also felt there should be more collaboration of everyone's resources and more willingness to help others.

Gunnar Grosenick is another college student who lives on the other side of the Happy Valley Neighborhood. When asked about community strengths, Grosenick discussed how much

diversity there is in this area. Grosenick could not think of meeting places for the community, but he was aware of the monthly community dinners that the neighborhood association provides. Grosenick also felt that that community interaction was lacking. It was interesting to hear another student talk about the lack of interactions between different ages within Happy Valley. Grosenick said that, “it seems that these different groups [students, families, elderly, etc] tend to keep to themselves and not interact with each other.”

Unlike the above interviews, Jay (from JJ’s In & Out) does not live in the Happy Valley Neighborhood; he only works in the area. At the beginning of the interview Jay made it clear that he does not know much about the entire neighborhood, but only the section in which his store is located. When asked about strengths, Jay mentioned the high volume of students in the area and how, if students stayed after they graduated, there would a lot of educated people in the community. At first he could not think of a meeting place for the community, but after a while he mentioned WWU, which is not part of Happy Valley, and Sehome Village. When asked about needs of the community, Jay responded by talking about how there does not seem to be a safe place for the children in the neighborhood to play. Again, I think that it is important to realize that interviewee does not live in this neighborhood and said that he does not know much about the area.

Needs Assessment

After completing the interviews with Happy Valley neighborhood residents, we found that one of the consistent needs that were mentioned was the interaction between community members. A few interviewees said that there is a lack of connection and communication between the different age groups within this area. The main groups of people who live in Happy Valley include students, families, elderly and single families. There needs to be a way to bring all of

these groups together within the neighborhood and to make each group feel as though they live in an inclusive and welcoming neighborhood.

The Happy Valley neighborhood is a very beautiful area, however walking around the neighborhood is not safe as there are very few sidewalks. The Happy Valley neighborhood has many schools whose students live within a one-mile walking distance. Due to the Bellingham School District's policy that those living within a one-mile radius of the school are not provided bus transportation, parents have to drive the students this short distance to school because of the lack of safe walking areas. By putting in crossing signs and sidewalks, parents would feel more comfortable allowing children to walk to school; it would also give the children to feel a sense of independence. As of right now the neighborhood association and Happy Valley Elementary School are working with the City Planning department to see if there is a possibility of adding sidewalks and signs to the area.

Through the interviews our group conducted we feel one of the biggest needs for Happy Valley is a meeting place. Carlos Traner and Jamie Carter mentioned places where they have gone to get things and met others they know, but it doesn't seem there is one central place that bridges the age gaps and reaches to all populations within the community. If Happy Valley could consider possibly having an improved, comfortable and central meeting space for all residents, this might help spark communication and collaboration among community members.

Recommendations for Meeting Needs

Prioritizing is a way to provide a strong start to meeting community needs in an efficient way. There are many methods for meeting community needs, but prioritizing in the beginning ensures that needs are met in the order of urgency (Adams, 2002, pp. 401).

Selecting outcomes of interest helps to ensure the desired effects for change are harmonious among community members. Developing and defining a mission statement and long-term objectives is a key ingredient to a successful start (Higgins & Metzler, 2006, pp. 490). There is common vision for the future; this helps the community feel whole while working towards their defined goals.

Gathering stories and experiences from various community members is often times a helpful tool when beginning to determine specific goals. Assuring that the community as a whole system not only feels, but knows they are a part of the process of change is important. All leaders and members have a responsibility to encourage and promote interaction and full disclosure of any changes taking place.

As the changes are starting to take their “full course,” begin evaluating and measuring the successes and challenges. Spread any methods once they are found effective. It is also important to remember that community change can be a trial-and-error process.

With all this in mind, we determined the specific needs of the Happy Valley neighborhood mainly by means of conducting interviews with community members. Through these interviews we were able to further define and prioritize the needs of this community according to the opinion of the community residents.

Strategic plan for accomplishing recommendations

Homan has a four-step process for creating change and empowerment within a community including: communication, decisions, action, and involvement (pp. 332). To begin the process of change in the Happy Valley neighborhood, we intend to meet with the Neighborhood Association Board to present our recommendations. “You will bring people

together to undertake a particular project...Regardless, of the nature and extent of the changes you seek, some sort of neighborhood organization will be involved” (pp. 377). This is why we are choosing to bring our findings to the Neighborhood Association. We feel this is the best way for them to feel empowered to undertake the changes they desire for their community. Through this meeting we hope that they will review the recommendations and do their own analysis of the community’s needs. As the Board makes decisions, they can then present them to other members of the Neighborhood Association. By including all those that wish to participate in the proposed changes, it will spur action and ownership of the community change. Homan says, “The decision to act and to succeed is the precondition to accomplishment” (pp. 332). With the neighborhood involved, they will then need to be in communication with large community agencies such as the City Planning department, City Council, and other important organizations. By having all of these organizations, agencies, and individuals involved it creates a network of possibilities.

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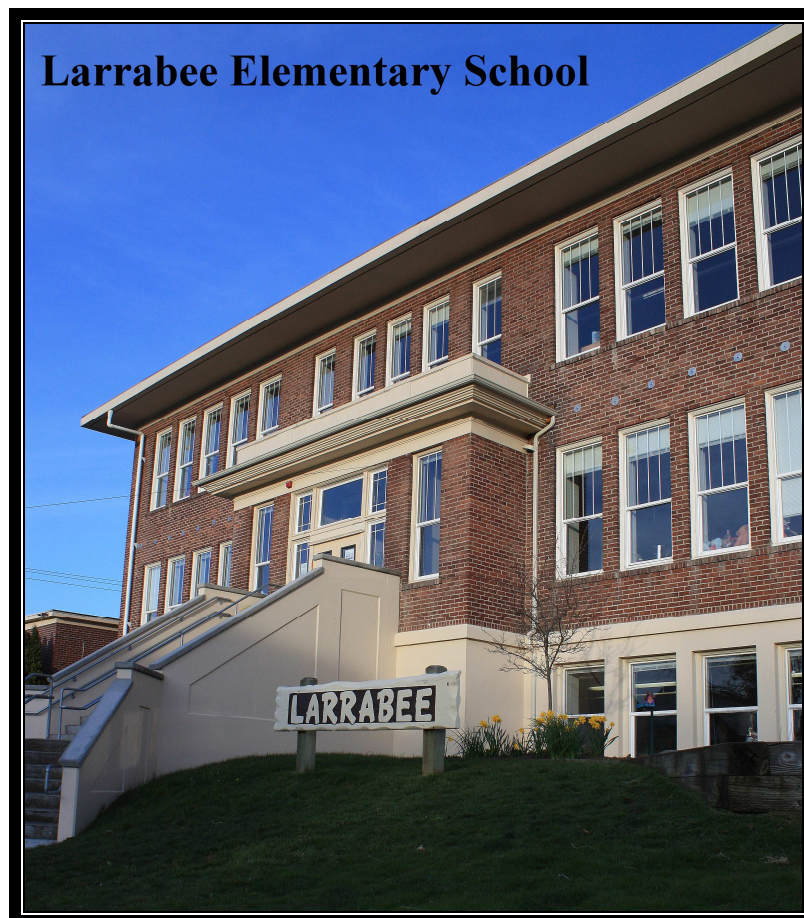
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Appendix B



Sehome Square







Fire House



Hillcrest Chapel



Joe's Garden



Connelly Creek