

## 1.1 The Beginning of the Illahee Community Plan

The Illahee Community Plan, hereafter referred to as the Plan, was developed in response to an awakened community spirit. The community was first settled in 1885 and, though relatively small in size, has maintained its identity and character. Over 90 years ago, in 1916, Illahee was officially chartered as a recognized community in Kitsap County.

The 1998 Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan adopted zoning which made Illahee a part of the East Bremerton Urban Growth Area (UGA). Because of that designation, Illahee was given an urban designation and, therefore, urban zoning. Illahee's close proximity to the City of Bremerton allowed Kitsap County to work together with Bremerton to plan for the future of Illahee.

Kitsap County updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2006. At that time, Illahee community members came together to request that Kitsap County staff evaluate the Illahee Community and create a Community Plan for the area. With work plans already docketed for 2007, the Board of County Commissioners allocated Community Planning staff time during 2008 to work with the Illahee Community on a Plan.

In 2006, a grassroots effort was conceived within the Illahee community with the goal of completing background work for the 2008 planning process. With support from Central Kitsap County Commissioner Patty Lent, county staff assisted the community effort by providing mapping and documentation support, attending a community meeting, and offering guidance and assistance when asked.

The grassroots effort produced a frequently asked question (FAQ) sheet in order to provide information to others within the community. Additionally, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to Illahee residents. From that questionnaire, 70 people responded indicating they would like to be involved in drafting the Illahee Community Plan, and all interested parties formed a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG).

The CAG decided to draft a plan for County consideration. They determined the Plan would go through three major stages of development – initial research, preparation of an initial draft, and incorporation of comments and corrections into a final draft.

In March 2006, the Illahee CAG submitted a draft plan to the County that was the culmination of over 18 months of effort that began when the initial community citizens' group met with county representatives in March 2006. Based on Illahee community input, the Illahee area received a down-zone through the Kitsap County 10-Year Update to the Comprehensive Plan (please see section 3.3 for further information). In 2007, the Plan began a second edit toward a final version and completed product for presentation to the Illahee community in September 2007, and a subsequent presentation to the Kitsap County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

In January of 2008, the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners adopted Resolution 015-2008, directing Department of Community Development staff to work on a subarea plan for Illahee.

## **1.2 A Brief History of Illahee**

The first people to spend time in Illahee were Native North Americans, probably of Suquamish descent. Discovered remains of a campground indicated they likely came often to hunt and dig for clams in the area. The name "Illahee" is a Native American word with a number of meanings related to "land" or "place" and has also been used to denote a "place of rest." The meaning "place of rest" was used in early writings about Illahee and is still used by the community.

The first non-native settler known in this area was William Christianson, who took up the first homestead at the center of Illahee in 1885. He did not complete the homesteading requirements on time, so he relinquished the property to his nephew, Samuel Anderson, who proved up the property in 1895. This property was near the current location of the community dock. Anderson brought cattle here, which were sold for food to logging camps and sawmills. He sold the property in 1903 when he returned to Sweden, but returned later to buy back the property now known as Rue Villa.

Around the turn of the century, the area began to attract attention as a resort, and the Homestead Inn was built to provide needed

lodging. This substantial structure is still in existence after serving as a home for the Palbitska family, who operated the Inn. After additional renovations, it is now a private residence on Illahee Road. Another historical landmark building during this time was the Bergh Ranch, which was built in 1898. It was a two-story structure surrounded by a large orchard and later became the Post Office for the area when mail was brought in by boat. The structure was torn down to build what are now residences along Illahee Road. The surrounding area is often referred to as the Bergh Plat.

In 1903, the Palbitska family, who had moved to the University Point area, established a ranch in the Derek Drive area. In the early 1920s, Oscar Applegren and his wife Emma, who had a ranch on the top of the hill in the Sunset area, cut a trail down a steep gulch to the Palbitska's ranch to gain access to a beach so they could row to the nearest town (Bremerton). The Applegrens, along with neighbor Hugh Kane, Emma's son Lawrence Browne (later changed to Brownell), and others used powder supplied by the county to blast out the first road from the Gilberton/Brownsville area into Illahee. The road project took three months.

Eventually the need for a school developed. At first, school children were rowed across the water to Crystal Springs on Bainbridge Island. Later, in 1907, a school was built on Ocean View Drive. Over the next 22 years, 9 to 30 children were in attendance until the school closed in 1929. A list of the school's 11 teachers is part of Illahee's historical record. As roads became more passable, Hugh Kane drove the local school bus. When large buses were finally able to come to Illahee, the children entered the Sheridan School District in Bremerton.

Ole Hanson of Seattle built the Illahee Community Dock in 1910 for his Land Development Company. Even though the dock has been upgraded several times over the last hundred years, it remains essentially as designed.

In 1916, Ole Hanson circulated a vigorous sales folder highlighting the water and forest views and the three existing houses. Ole's efforts resulted in increased building and the beginning of a flourishing resort and household area. Without roads, access to the area was by water only. The depression of 1929 forced a number of out-of-work Seattle homeowners to leave their Seattle residences and live in their Illahee vacation homes. The record shows that some of them worked here for wages as little as 5 to 25 cents an hour. Many Illahee homes were also abandoned, as well as the beautiful community club house next to the Illahee Community

Dock. Some of these homes were not reoccupied until the outbreak of World War II.

The first store in Illahee was located across the street from the Illahee Community Dock and was replaced in the early 1970s by a new Illahee store (which is currently closed). A second store run by Hugh Kane was a car repair garage and evolved to include a small grocery store. His store was located across the road from the residence at 5321 Illahee Road. Hugh also repaired and drove the Illahee/Gilberton buses, one of which was used as the school bus for the Manette area. Several years after Mr. Kane's death, his store was demolished.

In the early years, Illahee was accessible only by water. Later, the power boats *Vashonia* and *Chickaree* made daily trips to Bremerton and Bainbridge Island. As more small boats were added, they came to be called the Mosquito Fleet. The cost for travel to Bremerton or Seattle was small, and these boats were the main means of travel for some time. (See Figure 1.1 for additional information on the Mosquito Fleet and the Illahee community.)

Eventually, local residents began to push the county for better roads for vehicles to travel the very steep and muddy Illahee slope and into Bremerton. The only road, Fir Drive, went past the Avery and Byer homesteads and was considered barely useable in the 1930s. Kitsap County Commissioner Walter Rue had Illahee Road built in its present location in 1938 or 1939. The Mosquito Fleet vanished once cars had a reliable road system into Bremerton. Commissioner Rue built his residence in Illahee and named it Rue Villa, a name still used to describe the surrounding area.

At the bottom of the hill at 5171 Illahee Road is one of the first and finest houses in the Illahee area. It was built circa 1900 by Major Henry LaMotte, who was a medical officer with Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War. Dr. Ray Schutt bought the house in 1929. A log cabin was later built on the property in the 1930s by a grateful patient. Dr. Schutt also owned the adjacent beach and had a small dam installed upstream along Illahee Creek where he raised trout.

Water became scarce, so local residents worked out a water system by using the pools on the upper hill and Illahee Creek. The telephone system was the first utility to be reliable. A consistent supply of electricity came only after Puget Power began to manage the system.

In the 1930s, Kitsap County Commissioner Walter Rue contacted the East Bremerton Improvement Club (EBIC) to identify whether the present Illahee State Park site was suitable for a county or state park. The EBIC formed a committee and invited the state's park board to review the area. Washington State liked the site and purchased 13 acres of waterfront property from Kitsap County in 1934 for one dollar. The park opened in 1938, with subsequent additions of 45 acres and 11 acres in 1946 and 1949, respectively. The park presently comprises 75 acres and nearly 1,800 feet of waterfront on Port Orchard Bay.

At the center of the community is a tall flagpole with a sign announcing "Illahee Community since 1916." The flagpole, located at the Illahee Community Dock, is one of the distinguishing landmarks of the area. The Port of Illahee was established in 1922, primarily to maintain the dock, and is involved with many areas of interest within the Port District boundaries. The dock is a constant attraction for all ages with fishing, crabbing, squidding, SCUBA diving, kayaking, boating, and recreational swimming representing some of the more active uses. It also is a destination point for residents to enjoy the natural beauty of Port Orchard Bay, Mount Rainier, and the many vessels that navigate these waters.

In April 1941, the U.S. Navy took advantage of the area's sheltered deep water and assigned a small crew of four men from the Naval Degaussing Station in San Diego to establish a station. The crew initially moored a small degaussing barge at the end of the dock and later placed six mooring buoys out in the middle of the bay. The purpose of the Degaussing Station was to reduce the permanent magnetism of the steel of a ship in order to protect it from attracting magnetic mine explosives.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Navy took control of the Illahee community dock and established a larger presence in the community by stationing three large barges, many launches, and two Coast Guard patrol boats in the area. One huge ship after another was degaussed in this area. Each ship was wrapped with several thousand feet of electric cable as it floated quietly between the buoys. These cables went down the side and many times around the hull making a 674-foot electromagnet that neutralized (or degaussed) each ship. When the war ended, the Navy left the community dock, but continued to use the degaussing area at mid-channel until the buoys were removed in the 1970s.

In 2001, Kitsap County took a monumental step to preserve the natural resources of the area by purchasing 352 acres of the

remaining Department of Natural Resources (DNR) School Trust forest lands and primary watershed for use as open space and parks. In 2003, the Illahee Preserve was established, which not only included the old DNR acres, but also a great amount of private land. The Preserve's land along with Illahee State Park forms a significant open space and recreation green area, which will be lauded by future generations as the surrounding area between Bremerton and Silverdale continues to urbanize.

For more than a century, residents of Illahee have felt a sense of community. Often people would buy a house in the area with the idea of moving to somewhere else later. Quickly developing an appreciation for the water, lush greenery, and unique characteristics, they stay for years. Community spirit is active and strong. With this enduring spirit, this beautiful "place of rest" will remain a special place for residents and visitors for generations to come.

Chapter 8 includes additional information and photographs describing historical and archeological sites within the Illahee community. A more detailed look at the history of Illahee is contained in Book III, *The History of Kitsap County*, published by the Kitsap County Historical Society.

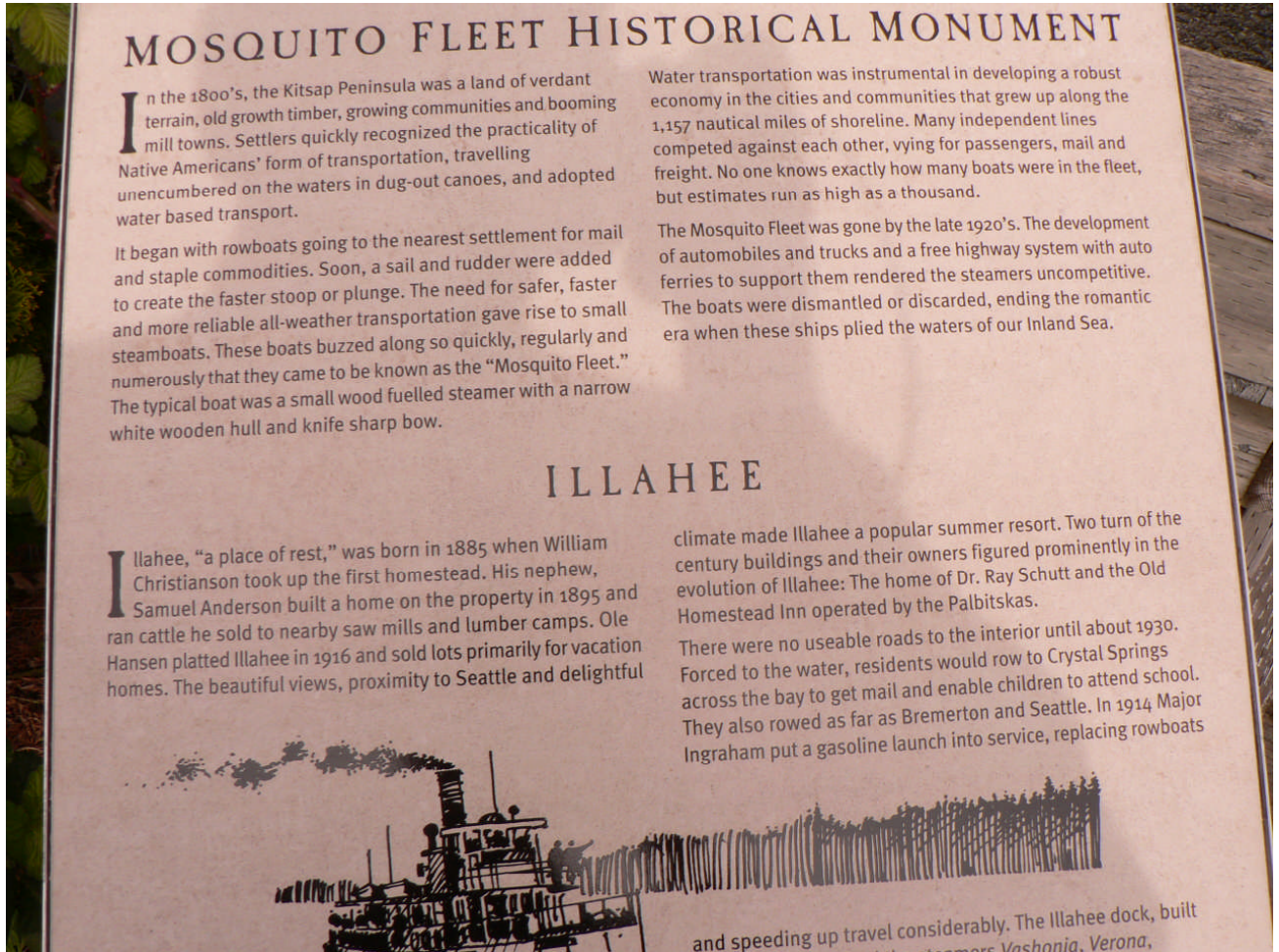


Figure 1.1 Mosquito Fleet Historical Monument at the Foot of Illahee Community Dock

### 1.3 Visions for the Illahee Community

The Illahee Community Plan is a statement reflecting the civic pride and community involvement that has existed for more than 120 years. The community shares a proud sense of accomplishment in all the current happenings: salmon restoration projects (1994-98), a new culvert (1999), the recent establishment of the Illahee Preserve (2003), and grants to improve conditions in the Illahee Creek watershed (2005/6/7). More importantly, many residents share a real concern for the future of Illahee if they and their neighbors are not actively and materially involved in the planning process. Many of the local citizens recognize what originally attracted them to this area and what keeps them here is now threatened. This planning process allows them to continue to make

improvements to further enhance the atmosphere and character of the area, ensuring that it remains the unique community they know and love.

When posed with the question, “What would you like to see addressed in a community plan?” residents envisioned a community centered around and amongst the abundance of natural resources in the area, which include Illahee State Park, Illahee Creek, and the Illahee Preserve; three miles of pristine waterfront; two major docks; and much more.

Citizens want to maintain the community charm and quaintness that Illahee currently offers. Residents wish to protect the unique quality of the natural environment, park areas, wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat. Residents also recognize the need to sustain the community connectedness and to accommodate reasonable growth in the area.

These visions and dreams can be accomplished by permitting growth in those areas where infrastructure enhancements already exist and environmental protections are ensured. This also means securing open space designations for the natural resources that need protection and, especially, those already specified as park or preserve. It is this mix of land uses that makes the Illahee area a unique blend of natural resources and open space surrounded by semi-rural areas, urban areas, and a short perimeter of a commercial business strip along State Highway 303.

Illahee is an area blessed with a diversity of natural and man-made resources. Residents desire a community plan that blends the best of these worlds into a place where they can continue to live in harmony with nature and their fellow citizens.

## **1.4 Public Participation**

### **Citizen Participation Pre-2008:**

Citizen involvement and participation were primary objectives of the beginning efforts. Meetings were advertised with signs placed throughout the community, an email list serve and a community website . The previously described, community written initial draft of the Illahee Community Plan was posted on the Illahee Community Website ([www.illaheecommunity.com](http://www.illaheecommunity.com)) to give the Illahee community and others further public access.

An initial questionnaire provided the necessary supporting quantitative data indicating that the Illahee community desired a community plan, and a significant number of residents were also willing to help with the process. Many residents responded affirmatively that they would “consider being a member of the Citizens Advisory Group working on the Plan.” This group began work in March 2006 and completed an Initial Draft July 5, 2006. This Initial Draft was distributed to the Kitsap County Commissioners and the Planning Commission on July 10, 2006.

No further revisions to the Plan were initiated in 2006 because it was completed too late for consideration at the Planning Commission’s public meetings or the Board of County Commissioners’ public meetings for the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update. Nevertheless, from July through much of December 2006, the Illahee community worked with county planners, the Planning Commission, and the County Commissioners to enact much of the Illahee zoning recommendations into the final version of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Update. Community participation in the public meetings held by the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners was significant. Illahee citizens were visible, concerned, and materially involved with the Comprehensive Plan land use decisions affecting the Illahee community.

During the time of the public meetings, frequent Illahee Community Updates were distributed via email to approximately 200 email recipients, with periodic mailings to the approximately 50 citizens who did not have email, to apprise them of the issues being considered. Additionally, coverage of the proceedings was available in the *Kitsap Sun* and the Kitsap Reporter Group newspapers.

The Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) began another review of the community drafted plan in 2007. Public meetings were held, and Illahee Community Updates were distributed via email to over 250 email recipients and posted on the Illahee Community Website. Periodic mailings to the nearly 100 citizens without email were less frequent due to mailing costs and the availability of the information on the Website.

**Public Participation 2008:**

Resolution 015-2008 indicated the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners gave their support to the Illahee Community Plan process. Therefore, the Kitsap County Department of Community Development (DCD) began working with the Illahee Community on

their plan in February 2008. A planning process was laid out and began with a postcard mailed to every property owner within the Illahee Community Plan boundary indicating a plan process was beginning and solicited participation.

An open house was held on February 25, 2008, and over 50 citizens were in attendance. At the open house, citizens were able to sign-up to be on the DCD-sponsored Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) or to be an interested party. It was explained that being a member of the CAG would include approximately two meetings a month. The interested parties list was created to receive updates and information regarding the planning process. CAG meetings were held on the following dates:

March 3, 2008  
March 17, 2008  
March 31, 2008  
April 15, 2008  
April 28, 2008  
May 5, 2008  
May 19, 2008  
June 2, 2008 and  
June 16, 2008.

During the meetings the CAG discussed the Illahee boundary, a vision for Illahee, zoning, development regulations, low-impact development, critical areas regulations, public infrastructure, parks and transportation. Summaries of the above meetings are available in an appendix of this plan.

The Kitsap County Planning Commission held work-studies on the Illahee Community Plan on July 22, 2008 and August 26, 2008. Additionally, the Kitsap County Planning Commission held a public hearing on September 9, 2008 to take testimony on the Plan. The Plan was forwarded to the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners with an approval vote of 8-1.

The Kitsap County Board of Commissioners held two work-studies regarding the Illahee Community Plan in November and December 2008. On November 24, 2008, the Board held a public hearing to take testimony on the proposed plan. On December 23, 2008, the Board voted to approve the Illahee Community Plan by a vote of 3-0.

## 1.5 Plan Implementation

The Illahee Community Plan concurrently amends and becomes functionally part of the Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan and development regulations upon adoption.

## 1.6 Goals and Policies

Each chapter of the Illahee Community Plan concludes with a Goals and Policies section, which is a standard feature of land use planning documents. The objective of a Goals and Policies section is to provide a summary of the pertinent issues in the various chapter subsections that have specific items that need to be carried forward into actions. The definitions associated with these terms are as follows:

**Goals** are ends toward which the plan is directed. They are usually somewhat general in form and express ideals.

**Policies** are intermediate milestones on the way to reaching goals. They are expressed in a form that is measurable and achievable.

The format for the goals and policies statements is to list the subsection of the chapter most associated with the goal, followed by a sequential numbering system for the policies.

## 1.7 Goals and Policies

**Goal 1.4 The community will establish a public process that supports the active and meaningful involvement of the community in local, county-wide, and regional issues.**

Policy 1.4-1 Ensure that Illahee residents have access to information regarding community events, activities, and land use decisions.

Policy 1.4-2 Encourage and support the continuation of the Illahee Community Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) to represent the citizens of Illahee in furthering the Plan's goals and policies.