



You can help shape the Harbor's future

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Tomorrow evening at Aberdeen High School a group of people are getting together to take on no less a challenge than charting a future for Grays Harbor. You're invited. It's an open house, starting at 5:30. You're invited because the organizers want this to be a bottom up effort with broad support. The whole point is finding out what you want for the community.

The group is Grays Harbor 2020. The roots of it go back about three years to some interest — mostly from Grays Harbor Paper LP — in encouraging green business here. It evolved into discussions about what makes for healthy communities in general.

It's a given that healthy communities have a healthy job base, but how that happens is complex. In our community, the job base for years has depended on us having a lot of trees. For a lot of reasons — cheaper wood elsewhere, changing societal values that led to policies slowing down logging, mechanization and companies focused on shareholders above long-term sustainability — being a great tree-growing area isn't what it used to be.

So now what? Good question. That's what tomorrow's meeting is about.

The group's premise is that if you make the community healthy socially, physically, aesthetically and in other ways, it has a chance to be healthy economically, for the long term.

The community forums they've done the past couple of years turned up thousands of ideas. They've narrowed them down to 37 strategies and 137 actions. Now they want to know what the public's priorities are.

Efforts like this are usually top down affairs that come strictly from the business community, with the emphasis on business recruitment. This one seems different to me. The 30 or so people who have been most active come from government, labor, business, environmental interests and the citizenry at large.

I'm convinced that business locates and thrives in communities that people want to

live in. And people want to live in communities that have good schools, good health habits, that look appealing, that have healthy attitudes about things like race and the environment and the list goes on.

You can help make the list. Be at Aberdeen High School tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

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