

Olmsted NEWS

FRIENDS OF SEATTLE'S OLMSTED PARKS

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Hiawatha Playfield Centennial



Hiawatha Playfield, 1925
Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, Item No. 64050

Annual Meeting - September 17

Join us on **September 17th at 11:00 a.m.** for a tour of Hiawatha Playfield, which is celebrating its centennial, followed by the FSOP Potluck and Annual Meeting. We will meet on the second floor of the Hiawatha Community Center, 2700 California Avenue SW, for a short presentation about the playfield before the tour.

We are pleased to have an excellent slate of officers and directors to propose. We are welcoming Eliot Muetting, to the board this year. Eliot is studying environmental planning at the University of Washington.

The director candidates in this election are Kathleen Conner (ex officio), Eliza Davidson (NAOP liaison), and Eliot Muetting. Candidates for our board officers are Jennifer Ott for president, Kathy Mendelson for vice president, Susan Olmsted for secretary, and Jim Gale for treasurer.

Several of our current directors will be leaving the board this year. We heartily thank Brooks Kolb, Sue Nicol, Charlie Sundberg, Dodi Fredericks, and Karen Janosky for their service to FSOP.

We are also beginning our annual membership drive in September. Your dues support a variety of programs that raise awareness of the Olmsted landscape heritage in Seattle and the Northwest. Please use the enclosed envelope to renew your membership today! Thank you for your continued support.

On **September 17**, from **11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**, the Hiawatha Community Center will be the site of a centennial celebration for the Hiawatha Playfield in West Seattle. Events will include a 5k walk/run, a pickleball tournament, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, a BBQ, and a concert in the park. FSOP will lead a tour through the park after a short presentation in the community center at 11:00 a.m.

When the playfield opened in 1911, *The Seattle Times* noted that, "The Hiawatha Playfield is rated as the model playfield of the system and will be patterned after very largely in the development of playgrounds in the future."

The *Times* also reported that the park, constructed "strictly in accordance with the Olmsted Plan," included a playground, an athletic field, tennis and basketball courts, a running track, two wading pools, and landscaped areas along the park borders. A field house was added to the park not long after it opened and the athletic field was modified in 1932 to accommodate a longer running track.

There have been additional changes to the park facilities over the past century, but the original Olmsted plan is largely intact, including its curved paths, landscaped areas that incorporate a number of native trees, and playgrounds.



Hiawatha Playfield, 1911, looking southeast from intersection of California Avenue SW and SW Lander Street
Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, Item No. 29297

Arboretum North Entry and Trail

In anticipation of changes to the point of land at the north end of the Arboretum, known as the WSDOT Peninsula, Seattle Parks is working with The Berger Partnership to develop plans for redesigning the peninsula and adding a multi-use trail through the Arboretum. Parks hopes to improve traffic flow, daylight Arboretum Creek, allow visitors to gain vistas of the Arboretum via a built hill, and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections with the new State Route 520 lid at Montlake Boulevard and through the park.

The Berger Partnership has been meeting with the public and various interested parties, including FSOP, to develop the plan. On Wednesday, August 31st, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Graham Visitors Center, Washington Park Arboretum, 2300 Arboretum Drive E., a public meeting will be held to gather input on the plan that has been developed. More information is available at www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/arboretum/.



North Entry and Multi-Use Trail project
Courtesy The Berger Partnership

NAOP GIS Project

The National Association for Olmsted Parks GIS project, to be known as Olmsted Online, is moving forward. The project will develop an interactive online map of Olmsted-designed properties in the greater Seattle area that will link to information and documents relating to the Olmsted design.

The response to the Request for Proposals was enthusiastic. Members of the selection committee are interviewing the finalists and will announce their choice in late August. Work will then begin on developing the map data and the online interface and on determining which materials to digitize.



Aerial view of Volunteer Park showing the reservoir, concourse, and water tower, 2011, Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, Item No. 114469

Volunteer Park Landmark Nomination

FSOP will present the Volunteer Park landmark nomination to the Landmarks Preservation Board at 3:30 p.m. on **Wednesday, September 21**, in Room 4060 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5th Avenue, Floor 40. The meeting is open to the public and we encourage FSOP members to attend and show their support for the nomination.

After our presentation, the board will consider the nomination and vote on approval of all or part of the nomination. A second meeting will be held in October or November (meeting notices are posted at www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/agendas.htm) to finalize the designation. Once the designation is complete, the next step will involve negotiations between the Landmarks Board and the landowners to determine what controls and incentives will be put into place to protect the park's historical elements.



Water tower, Volunteer Park, 1930
Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, Item No. 30513

Seattle Parks Update

Construction season is in full swing and Seattle Parks and Recreation has several projects in Olmsted parks throughout the city.

Washington Park Arboretum - New Zealand Focal Forest. The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks recently reviewed plans for this project and were updated on implementation of the Arboretum Master Plan. The construction and plant establishment will span three years, including tree removals in 2011, grading and installation of infrastructure in 2012, and planting in the early spring of 2013.

Jefferson Park Expansion Project. Phase I of this Pro Parks Levy project is physically complete. The dedication will occur in the late summer of 2011 once all the turf areas are established and additional projects are complete. The inaugural cricket match occurred on July 9 with great fanfare.

Jefferson Park Beacon Mtn. This is a community-initiated project funded in part by the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy and intended to be an ecologically oriented playscape. The Mountain will have climbable slopes, boulders, and slides and a "park sized sprinkler" water feature for summer fun. Picnic shelters with solar panels are also being constructed in partnership with Seattle City Light. Construction will be completed by early winter.

Jefferson Park Playfield Project. The Jefferson Play Field project funded by the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy intends to renovate an existing, deteriorated, natural turf field into a synthetic turf field with lighting. Parks awarded the bid for this project to MidMountain Construction and the Notice to Proceed was issued for July 5. The Master Use Permit and Construction Permit have been approved. Construction has started and will likely extend through the beginning of 2012.

Jefferson Park Skate Park. Construction has just begun at Jefferson and is anticipated to be completed by fall 2011. The skate park is large enough to have skating opportunities for a broad range of users. It is another element that will help bring more folks into this Olmsted park.

Lower Kinnear Park. Planning is continuing for the renovation of Lower Kinnear Park. Funding for the project includes the Parks and Green Spaces Levy, Neighborhood Matching Fund, and community fundraising by Friends of Lower Kinnear Park. In the spirit of the Olmsted park system, improvements to Kinnear will improve the linkages between Belltown/Downtown, Magnolia, and Puget Sound.

Bobby Morris Playfield – Ballfield Lighting Replacement. A new, state-of-the-art lighting system will greatly

reduce light spill into the surrounding neighborhood and improve overall safety by replacing the wood poles with concrete poles. The project should be done by early fall.

Golden Gardens Play Area Renovation. A new play area is open near the Golden Gardens Bathhouse. The play area is likely to be popular with families and increase the draw for this Olmsted park. Official opening festivities will be held on August 29th, starting at 5:00 p.m.

Volunteer Park Play Area Renovation. The Volunteer Park play area is scheduled to be renovated in 2012. In anticipation of that work, Parks has begun the planning process, focusing on play structures, accessibility improvements, and connections between the play area and wading pool. The schematic design will also be presented to the Landmark Architectural Review Board in August. The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks looked at the alternatives in July and will have another opportunity to review the plans in the fall.

Volunteer Park Landmark Nomination. FSOP prepared a Seattle Landmark nomination for the park. The initial review of the nomination by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board will be held on September 21st. The public is welcome to attend the meeting and to comment on the nomination.

Park Boulevard Signage. The installation of brown signs on park boulevards is continuing. Discovery Park is the next location to get the new signs. Parks is working with Seattle Department of Transportation on the signage project. The goal of having the brown signs on park boulevards is to ensure that the public knows that the boulevards are in parks ownership and also to call attention to Olmsted boulevards.

Hiawatha Community Center Centennial. The centennial anniversary of the opening of the Hiawatha Community Center is scheduled for September 17, 2011. There will be a number of activities during the day at this event. For more information contact the community center at 206-684-7441. Everyone is welcome to attend.

National Association of Olmsted Parks. Seattle Parks was asked to submit photos of Olmsted parks that integrate current uses to establish eligibility for state grants through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. The Board of Park Commissioners will be briefed on the draft plan in May. A public hearing will follow (date TBD). More information is available at: <http://seattle.gov/parks/Publications/DevelopmentPlan.htm>.

If you have any questions about these projects or plans, please contact Kathleen Conner at Seattle Parks: Kathleen.Conner@seattle.gov or 206-615-1299.

Looking Back on Our Accomplishments

I have served the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks for seven years now, including four years as your president. It has been an extremely eventful and productive time for our three-pronged cause to preserve, advocate for, and spread the word about our wonderful Olmsted legacy of parks and boulevards.

Our monthly work as a board is often reactive since we are called upon to respond to the many proposals for change in the Olmsted parks that seemingly come out of nowhere. Before volunteering with FSOP, I had absolutely no idea of the magnitude of pressures for change that constantly beset our Olmsted parks. For example, who would have predicted that a vogue for "skate dots" and "spots" would blow like the wind into our parks or that suddenly a private garbage collection and recycling company would propose to purchase new play equipment for the swingsets in Washington Park, completely circumventing the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation's standard design review process?

Perhaps especially because so much of our work as a board involves reacting to the many odd, inappropriate, and even sometimes welcome changes that are constantly proposed in the Olmsted parks, I wanted to take a moment to look back at what we have succeeded in accomplishing *pro-actively* during my tenure as FSOP president:

- Most important in my view, is our work to **nominate Volunteer Park as a Seattle landmark**. Last spring, the Landmarks Preservation Board accepted our nomination proposal for review and we expect that they will vote to nominate the park in September, and for designation a month later. The nomination document is an impressive history of the park's landscape as a whole, as well as of its component buildings, reservoir and monuments, together with a contextual summary of the national and local significance of the Olmsted Brothers' work in Seattle. Extending to over 100 pages long, with many historic and contemporary photographs, the nomination went well beyond earlier standard for nomination documents, which were often only a few pages long. Congratulations are due to my co-authors – lead author Charlie Sundberg, editor Jennifer Ott, and author Sue Nicol.
- In 2009, we celebrated the **centennial of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition**. Aided by a highly professional PowerPoint presentation prepared by Olmsted scholars Anne Knight and Jerry Arbes, of our Board of Advisors, as well as an A-Y-P brochure and "Olmsted Centennial News" produced in the style of the A-Y-P-era *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the entire board came together to lead a series of campus presentations and walking tours that lasted over a period of six months, with at least one tour per month, and enthusiastic crowds of 25 to 50+ people. We also presented at Historic Seattle's A-Y-P Centennial conference held at MOHAI in June 2009.
- Following the A-Y-P Centennial, **we advocated strongly for the preservation of the Olmsted legacy on the University of Washington campus**, weighing in on various proposed designs for the Rainier Vista. Two major infrastructure projects, the new light rail station (located at Huskey Stadium) and the State Route 520 bridge and interchange redesign, will impact the historic view corridor that is central to the Olmsted-designed campus. Arguing persuasively that the Olmsted plan of roads, paths, open spaces, and vistas on campus is an enduring framework for current and future urban design decisions as the University grows, we sponsored a symposium and panel discussion at the College of the Built Environment in December 2009, with the active participation of the Departments of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Again supported by the impressive scholarship of Anne Knight and Jerry Arbes, the symposium was reported in the April 2010 issue of *Landscape Architecture* magazine, co-authored by Anne, Jerry, and myself.
- Around the time of the AYP Centennial, board member Joan Hockaday's book, ***Greenscapes: Olmsted's Pacific Northwest***, appeared in bookstores, raising the profile of John Charles Olmsted's historic design and planning legacy yet further in the public record.
- Throughout my tenure on the board, **FSOP has worked tirelessly to save the Washington Park Arboretum from the incursion of significant projected traffic increases from the re-de-**

signed State Route 520. Due in large part to board member Larry Sinnott's dogged determination in the face of opposition from two or more neighborhood groups and several city and state officials, the preferred alternative will eliminate the Arboretum on- and off-ramps from the highway and introduce a traffic-calming program that will help to reduce traffic speed and noise in the park.

- **FSOP successfully advocated for preserving the iconic views from the State Capitol in Olympia over Capitol Lake and Puget Sound.** Board members Eliza Davidson and Susan Olmsted drafted a landscape management plan for the Olmsted-designed capitol grounds as paid, private contractors but gave generously of their time leading tours of the Capitol campus, using a terrific new historical brochure produced by Anne Knight and Jerry Arbes.

Of special pride to me are two additional recent endeavors that are still in the nascent stage:

- Based on a shared idea of board member and NAOP-liaison Eliza Davidson and myself, **NAOP successfully applied for a \$235,000 federal highway grant to create interactive mapping of Olmsted parks and boulevard system in the greater Seattle area,** using geographic information systems (GIS.) The project has been awarded to a private GIS consultant, and more information will be available shortly. Many thanks are due to Kirsty Burt, a local GIS consultant who volunteered many hours of her time consulting on the preparation of the Request for Proposals as well as the consultant selection.
- Again beginning with discussions I had with Eliza Davidson and later with board members David Dougherty and Richard Piacentini, **FSOP has begun to investigate potential solutions to the problem of perpetual under-funding of Olmsted parks maintenance and management.** While this problem strikes all of Seattle's parks, it is especially critical in the historic Olmsted parks and boulevards. Working closely with the Seattle Parks Foundation, FSOP will look into options to create an Olmsted park conservancy or an "Olmsted legacy fund" endowment that can supplement public funding for parks maintenance and management. Given an environment in which parks levies prioritize new park acquisition and improvements over stewardship of existing parks, this endeavor is especially critical.

In closing, I can't help but mention many of the board's more minor achievements in the last few years. To name just a few of our projects, we have reviewed and influenced new master plans and designs for portions of Jefferson Park, the Seward Park play area, Cheasty Boulevard and Mount Baker Boulevard, the Green Lake Community Center environs, the Arboretum's Pacific Connections Garden, a new trail for Colman Park, and mitigation for combined sewage overflow (CSO) tanks in Seward Park and along Lake Washington Boulevard. I also represented FSOP on the project advisory team for drafting a new Vegetation Management Plan for Lake Washington Boulevard. Moreover, FSOP Vice President Sue Nicol researched the history of Green Lake Park, one of the least understood Olmsted parks, for a special presentation to the Friends of Green Lake Park in April 2011, followed by a Green Lake walking tour in May. Finally, we participated in the Seward Park Centennial in June 2011, with an Olmsted walking tour.

There will be many new and ongoing challenges confronting the Olmsted parks in the years to come, but we have a talented, engaged, and cohesive board that is equal to the task. I have been extremely impressed by the level of commitment and involvement of all of our board members, advisors, and the general membership. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve FSOP as your president.

On September 17th we will celebrate the centennial of Hiawatha Playfield with new Olmsted history panels, to be installed on the Hiawatha Community Center and in the neighboring Safeway store, again produced by Anne Knight and Jerry Arbes. I hope you will join us for the walking tour at 11:00, followed by our annual meeting and potluck picnic.

Sincerely,



Olmsted

FRIENDS OF SEATTLE'S OLMSTED PARKS

P.O. Box 9884, Seattle, Washington 98109
www.seattleolmsted.org, friends@seattleolmsted.org
Jennifer Ott, *Newsletter Editor*

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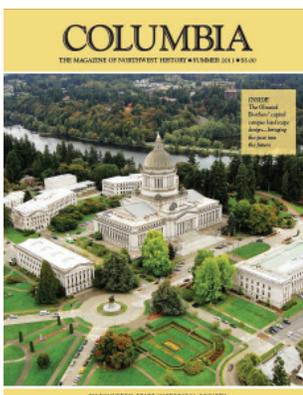
The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to raising the awareness and protection of Seattle's Olmsted park and boulevard system. We depend on members' dues and donations to support our efforts. Dues for individuals are \$25/year and households \$50/year, which helps defray program, newsletter, and mailing expenses.

Address Correction Requested

Capitol Campus

Eliza Davidson and Susan Olmsted, FSOP board members, have been very involved in promoting understanding and appreciation of the Capitol campus' Olmsted legacy. In early August they gave tours in conjunction with Wilder & White Days, which were held to celebrate the development of the campus by the architectural firm Wilder & White.

Eliza and Susan also contributed essays to the Summer issue of *Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History*, which is available to order or download at <http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/magazine/>.



Olympia Capitol Park

A key element of the Olmsted design for the capitol campus in Olympia is the vista from the capitol across Capitol Lake and beyond to Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. The vista has been threatened by a proposed development on the isthmus between the lake and Puget Sound.

Last fall, the Olympia City Council made permanent a zoning change that lowered the height limits allowed on the isthmus and limited the uses allowed for the property. The zoning change set the stage for development that will preserve the vista.

In July, the Thurston County Board Commissioners awarded \$600,000 from its Conservation Futures program to the Olympia Capitol Park Foundation, which is working to develop a park on the isthmus. As a condition of the grant, the foundation has to raise \$3 million over the next two years for development of the park.

More information about the foundation's plans can be found at www.nuprometheus.com/Park/index.html.