

## Lake Washington Boulevard Draft Vegetation Management Plan Meeting Rainier Community Center – November 30, 2006

Although I have not been able to attend the previous meeting on the Lake Washington Blvd VMP, I have read the draft plan and have been informed by neighbors about the discussions at previous meetings.

First let me say I, along with many people in this room, are profoundly grateful to the Olmsted brothers and former leaders of Seattle for their vision and commitment to establishing a wonderful park system that we continue to enjoy today and that will be available to many generations in years to come. I agree with the Friends of Olmsted that “today's challenge is not only to protect and preserve our century-old legacy but also to carry the Olmsted philosophy into the next 100 years of landscape design and planning in order to ensure the preservation of open space in the century to come.”

I also believe that there are many positive aspects of the draft Lake Washington Vegetation Plan.

However, I, along with many others here, do not accept the basic premises from which this draft Lake Washington Vegetation Plan was developed.

- We do not believe that the existing views from within our park along Lake Washington are not “special” because they are open.
- We do not believe that significantly increasing the density of vegetation in our park so most views are ‘internalized’ is the best way to “showcase and protect the spectacular Pacific Northwest landscape” and provide “access and opportunities for all of Seattle's citizens to experience and enjoy their extraordinary natural environment.”
- We do not believe grassy lawns should be greatly reduced because you say they were not part of the original Olmsted plan and because they ‘get heavy use in the summer.’ (They get heavy use because people like using them which is an argument to keep them, not take them away.)
- We do not believe that Olmsted thought a park should or could only be beautiful from beneath trees
- We do not believe that Olmsted thought tall trees should wall off and block out the views of surrounding areas from ‘the people.’
- We do not believe that the cherry trees are simply ‘ornamental’s’ and should be replaced

In addition, many of us are very unhappy about the park officials’ lack of responsiveness to us:

- When we raised concerns about slope stability noting a University of Washington study that tall trees are not suitable for steep slopes, that study was disparaged by park officials.
- When we presented a list of other vegetation to stabilize the slope (including some plantings used along the Gilman trail), they were dismissed as 'ornamental.'
- When we have noted that there are underground streams along Lakewood that compromise the slope's stability and have caused slides in the past, this has been ignored.
- When we have pointed out that a sewer line runs along portions of the west side of Lake Washington Boulevard and tree roots have caused several sewer breaks and backup, this has not been adequately acknowledged.
- When we noted a number of car accidents that have occurred because people have driven into trees too closely planted to the road, that has been discounted.
- When people expressed joy in having the cherry trees, the trees were said to be diseased and 'ornamental' thereby not being in keeping with Olmsted's plan.
- When residents asked that their present views of the park, lake and mountains be maintained as much as possible, and not be unnecessarily blocked by up to 100' evergreens, we have been dismissed and told that our desire may not be compatible with the 'intent' of the design.

Most importantly, we think this draft VMP plan was developed the wrong way around. We, Seattle citizens, should have been the first people consulted about how the park would work best for us as those who live by it and use it every day. Instead goals for the plan were designated without community input and a whole plan but together that is presented to us in such a fashion that we can have no real impact on it. We do not believe that university students (who may or may not live in Seattle) and a few planners know what is best for our area of the city.

We would like the entire plan rethought and redone. We want a genuinely collaborative process to establish objectives and goals for the future of Lake Washington Boulevard Park that includes neighboring residents, other interested Seattle citizens, the Friends of Olmsted, the Parks Foundation and park officials. After these goals and objectives are developed, then a plan can be devised that we all buy into as opposed to this plan that we feel alienated from because it is being forced upon us. We believe the planners, in many instances, have selectively used aspects of Olmsted's philosophy to justify their design intent and have conveniently ignored other Olmsted ideas that do not suit them and this design is not in the best interest of us, the citizens of this city. This has not been an open, transparent process.

Furthermore, we believe that the community did not understand that in the park's vernacular a "vegetation management plan" really means a long-term master

plan that involves many significant changes to the existing park as we know it. We think the flyer giving notice of the meetings was misleading. It said "Join us to discuss the future maintenance of vegetation on Lake Washington Boulevard." "Future maintenance" means maintenance of what exists into the future. The notice says "Tree replacement schedules" will be discussed. That means replacing existing trees. The notice does not say anything about the planting of lots of new vegetation and significantly increasing the density of the vegetation. Many people we have talked to said they did not attend the previous meetings because they thought the topic was 'routine maintenance and management procedures.' I think that 3 ½ months is way too short a time period for the public to be able to digest, think about and give meaningful comments on a plan this complex and one that covers such a large area. I question whether adequate notice was given about the draft plan by sending out only one notice covering 6 meetings over 3 ½ months.

We invite the city to turn our current frustration and anger into positive energy to help improve the park. We love and treasure our park along Lake Washington Blvd.

We would like this statement to be included in the body of the minutes in it's entirely.

Thank you.  
Sandy Schoolfield

Emily Ericson

Jon Kechejian