

LAKE WASHINGTON

LAKE ■ WASHINGTON ■ BOULEVARD
 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Long Range Guidelines and Design Improvement Program for the Restoration of the Lake Washington Boulevard will provide direction for capital improvement projects, and maintenance and operations for the rest of the century. The capital improvement projects are authorized by the Seattle 1-2-3 Bond issue, approved by Seattle voters in September 1984.

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation commissioned a private consultant team, led by the Seattle office of EDAW Inc., Landscape Architects, Urban Designers and Planners, to prepare this study and design the improvements.

Lake Washington Boulevard is the main link in Seattle's city-wide system parks and boulevards recommended by the Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, in 1903. The Boulevard was intended to provide the central link connecting Ravenna, Magnolia, and Queen Anne Boulevards to Beacon, Duwamish and West Seattle Boulevards. This Boulevard system connects many of Seattle's major parks, including Discovery Park, Green Lake, Woodland Park, Seward Park, Jefferson Park, and Lincoln Park. It also provides visual and physical access to the city's major water features - the Puget Sound, Lake Washington, and Lake Union.

Lake Washington Boulevard lies along Seattle's eastern edge. The 9.2 mile north/south corridor passes through residential neighborhoods, parks, forests, and along the shore of Lake Washington. It links the University of Washington campus at the north end, to Seward Park at the south end (Figure 1).

Several residential neighborhoods are adjacent to the Boulevard. They include the Montlake, Harrison, Madrona, Leschi, Mt. Baker, and Lakewood/Seward Park communities.



Figure 1 Regional Context

Executive Summary

Study Process

This study is developed through a five phase process. Historic research, inventory, analysis, and alternative concept phases culminate with the development of long range guidelines and a design improvement program.

The Historic Research phase documents the historical context, the Olmsted Brothers' design intent, actual implementation, and the as-built condition of the Boulevard.

The Inventory phase gathers a wide array of information related to the Boulevard's maintenance and operation, visual quality, land use, public services, and physical condition.

The Analysis phase synthesizes the historic research and inventory information into three related analyses. The first, Landscape Character Types, categorizes the Boulevard into three general areas: Residential, Park and Forest, and Lake Shore. The second, Issues, Problems and Opportunities, provides a summary of the Boulevard's existing condition. The third, Historic Intent vs. Existing Conditions, provides the basis for the generation of alternative concepts.

The Alternative Concept phase uses the analyses to develop a continuum of approaches for the development and use of the Boulevard. At one end is an alternative which embodies the most accurate historic restoration of the landscape as possible, given present ownership and topographic features. At the other end is an alternative which envisions designs using contemporary materials, the accommodation of contemporary uses, and the minimization of maintenance and operations.

The Long Range Guidelines and Design Improvement Program refines concepts, guidelines, and designs from the alternative concept phase. It recommends historic restoration, or historically sympathetic designs, in order to create a Boulevard landscape which reflects the Olmsted Brothers' original design intent.

Community Participation is an important and integral part of the planning and design process. A Boulevard Advisory Committee provides community-wide representation and input. Three public presentations to the Committee have been made to date. In addition numerous workshops with the Montlake, Harrison, Leschi, Mt. Baker and Lakewood/Seward Park communities were held.

The following paragraphs summarize the key elements of this study.



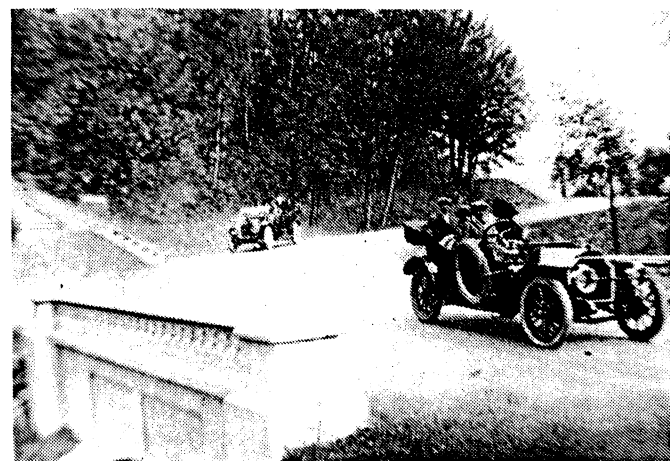
Mt. Baker Beach

History

Lake Washington Boulevard is the main link in Seattle's city-wide system of parks and parkways recommended by the Olmsted Brothers in 1903. In the design development and construction of the system, the Olmsted's continued to consult with the city for some thirty-five years.

As proposed, Lake Washington Boulevard was to run about 9.2 miles from Bailey Peninsula in the south (now Seward Park) to the Alaska Yukon Pacific Grounds adjoining Lake Union in the north (now the University of Washington grounds). It joined several existing parks into a continuous system.

The Boulevard was intended to be a "charming scenic drive among native trees" with "numerous views of lakes and other distant landscapes". For much of its length, it followed the eastern shore of Lake Washington. There were two upland sections: between Colman and Frink Parks, and from the lake shore north of Madrona Park to the Alaska Yukon Pacific Grounds.



Colman Park

In defining the intended scenic image, John Charles Olmsted distinguished between a "boulevard" as a formal street of uniform width (usually 200 feet) and formal plantings, and a "parkway" of variable width and of "informal landscape gardening or natural scenery". Originally, much of the Boulevard was to pass through the predominantly indigenous forest and have a "parkway" image. However, the Olmsteds' foresaw expansion of the adjacent residential areas and anticipated sections in which the "boulevard" image would be appropriate. In fact, constraints on the width of land taken for the Boulevard prevented the full realization of either, if the definitions are strictly applied. Today, the 9.2 mile boulevard may be categorized as 47% lake shore, 30% park and forest, and 23% residential.

Throughout their extended consultancy, the Olmsteds produced plans and details for several parts of the Boulevard (such as Washington and Colman Parks, Frink Boulevard south of Leschi Park, Wetmore Slough, now Stan Sayres Pits and Ohler Island, now Lakewood Moorage) and numerous other plans for the entire Seattle system of parks and parkways (such as Seward, Jefferson, Green Lake and Volunteer Parks). Together, these provide a clear picture of their design intent and actual, as-built construction. Of particular relevance is a long letter from J.C. Olmsted in 1909 covering all aspects of the work, and photographs taken in the period 1909-1914.

The evidence shows that there were a good many problems interpreting the Olmsted's directions for the scenic parkway. A general criticism from the 1909 letter states that "while the drives are successful in opening up the park to the public and affording them the benefit of enjoying the wonderful views, the detailed landscape treatment has been very much neglected or has been done in a stiff and formal manner distressingly out of harmony with the wild beauty of the natural woods and ground covering growths".

In considering improvements to Lake Washington Boulevard today, the historic record confirms that similar problems to those encountered in the past have been compounded over time: residential encroachment, visual interruptions, traffic conflicts, inconsistent structures and furnishings, declining vegetation and exotic introductions, overuse and abuse, and inadequate maintenance. In attempting to correct these, the historic design intent should be a starting point.



Wetmore Slough

Inventory

VISUAL QUALITY

The visual quality of Lake Washington Boulevard makes it a memorable part of Seattle. It provides a variety of spatial qualities: the open vistas and views of woodlands, mountains and water contrast with enclosed forest corridors. The steep switchbacks in Lakeview, Frink and Colman Parks provide topographic interest in an otherwise level terrain.

However, at several points along its route this visual quality has been interrupted by development of residential and commercial land uses and urban traffic arterials.

LAND USE

Park, forest, or lake shore are the predominate land uses along the Boulevard.

In those areas where the Boulevard passes through residential areas, private encroachment on public park property is a pervasive problem. Residential property owners have developed park property adjacent to their lots in such a way that it is perceived that private property extends to the roadway. Parking encroachment is visually obtrusive and damaging to the landscape.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Recreational activity is the predominant use of Lake Washington Boulevard. It includes people watching, walking, jogging,

bicycling, swimming, boating, canoeing, sailing, fishing, picnicking, and sunning. Special events include Bicycle Sunday and the annual Seafair Hydroplane Races.

The majority of user facilities are for water related use.

Storm or combined sewer/storm lines provide storm drainage along the developed portions of the Boulevard. In the undeveloped park and forest areas (parts of the Harrison neighborhood, Lakeview Park, Frink Park, Colman Park, and the Mt. Baker neighborhood) no drainage system exists.

TRANSPORTATION

The Boulevard is one of the major scenic transportation corridors in Seattle. It is used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and people in automobiles. It is a collector arterial used as a commuter route, as a recreational pleasure drive, and as an access road for the abutting commercial uses, recreational facilities, and single or multiple family residences. The City's goal has long been to reduce traffic volume and speed as a means to increasing safety and recreational pleasure.

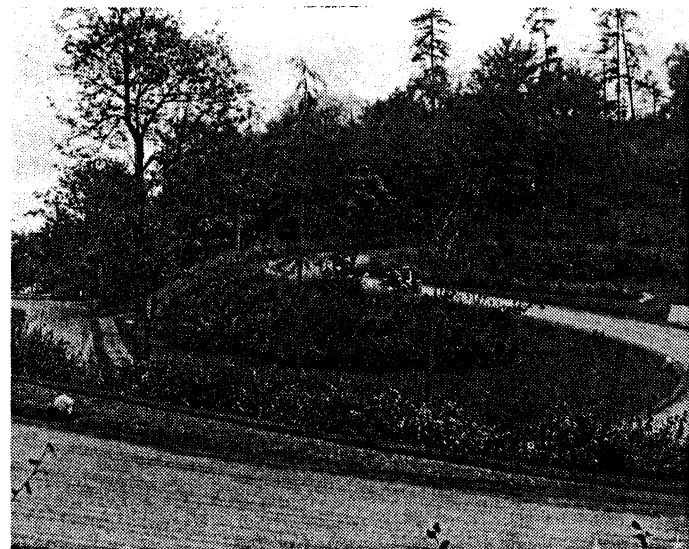
PHYSICAL CONDITION

For eighty years the Boulevard landscape has been one of Seattle's showcase parks. Now, because of its age, a significant portion of the natural and built elements are reaching maturity or are deteriorating.

The Boulevard landscape is either sparse or non-existent in Residential areas. The parkway landscape in Park, Forest, and Lake Shore areas is a mixture of indigenous forest, informal plantings and formal street trees.

The built elements of the Boulevard are an eclectic mixture of drives, pathways, structures, furnishings and materials. Deterioration, inconsistent replacement, and incremental improvements have eliminated the unity of the built environment. Several historic structures still remain, including the Colman and Frink Park bridges, and the Dose Terrace Stairs.

Lack of road edge treatment for the Boulevard in the Montlake, Madison, Upper Boulevard, and Mt. Baker neighborhoods has created drainage problems and allowed the pavement edge to deteriorate. Missing links in the walkway system occur throughout the Residential, and Park and Forest areas.



Colman Park

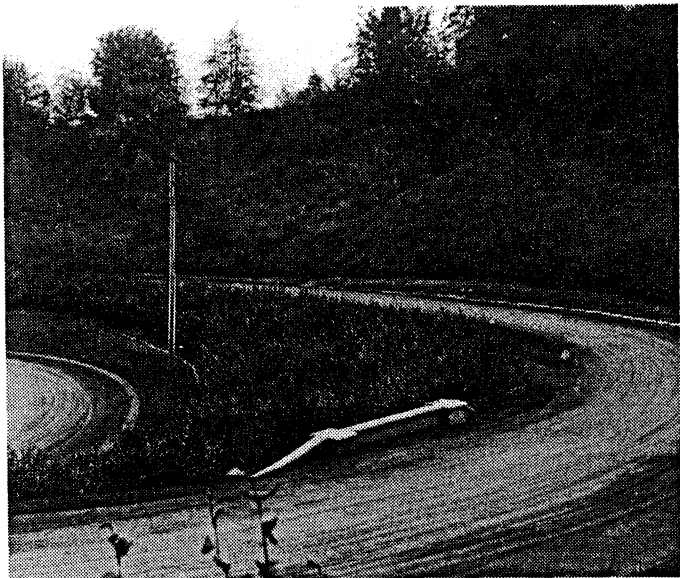
The Scenic Character Guidelines identify key entrances and intersections for special emphasis, and recommended landscape treatment for each character area.

The Landscape Restoration Guidelines recommend a formal Boulevard landscape in the Residential character areas and informal indigenous plantings in the Park/Forest and Lake Shore character areas.

The Drive Guidelines recommend where possible the redevelopment of graceful curve and grade alignment.

The Walk and Path Guidelines recommend completion of the pedestrian path system and accommodation of bicyclists on a uniform 25 foot drive.

Finally, The Structures, Furnishings and Materials Guidelines recommend screening of visually obtrusive structures along the lake shore and use of natural materials which are unobtrusive and rustic in character.



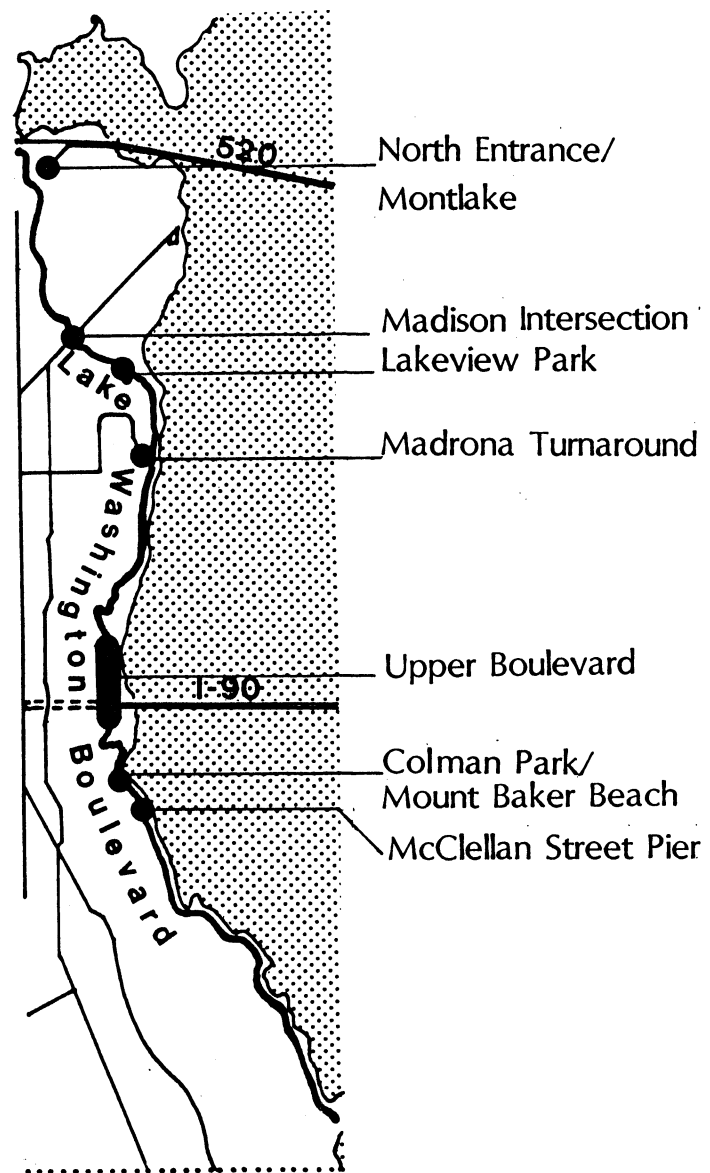
Colman Park

DESIGN PROGRAM

The design program identifies \$7.2 million in reparations, restorations, and improvements along the Boulevard. It makes specific recommendations for each of the seventeen landscape sub-areas. Each area and the elements within each area, are prioritized, based on safety, visual continuity, drive condition, degree of encroachment, and condition of the existing landscape, structures, and furnishings. These priority ratings are the basis of the Seattle 1-2-3 Bond Issue Design Improvement Program. \$1.5 million is allocated to seven project areas including Montlake, Madison, Lakeview Park, Madrona, the Upper Boulevard, Mt. Baker, and the McClellan St. Pier. In addition, a system of Boulevard signs are identified for the key entrances and intersections along the Boulevard.

(Figure 2)

The specific improvements include planting, overlooks, sidewalks, roadway edge treatment, parking, and bridge and retaining wall restoration. Stone piers, an entry wall, and sign at Montlake Blvd. will define the Boulevard's north entrance. Extensive landscape redevelopment is planned north of the Arboretum and south of E. Madison St. At the Madrona Dr. trolley turnaround, a pedestrian overlook and gazebo reminiscent of those found along the lake shore at the turn of the century is envisioned. Roadway and parking definition, sidewalks, street tree planting, and a new overlook at the I-90 will transform the Upper Boulevard into a park boulevard. At Mt. Baker Beach, road improvements will return hierarchical importance to the Boulevard, while directing commuter traffic to Lakeside Ave. S. Special paving at the Dose Terrace Stairs and Lake Park Dr. will mark pedestrian crossings. Parking is provided at the McClellan St. Pier.



Design Program
Figure 2