



Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks

P.O. BOX 9884, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98109-0884
SEATTLEOLMSTED.ORG FRIENDS@SEATTLEOLMSTED.ORG

Board of Directors

3 November 2014

Jennifer Ott
President

Jean Godden, Chair
Parks, Seattle Center, Libraries and Gender Pay Equity Committee
Seattle City Council

Jim Gale
Treasurer

Jenifer Rees
Secretary

Dear Councilmember Godden:

Doug Bayley

We have become aware of a rezoning that has occurred in the Mount Baker Town Center area, which is located at the convergence of two Olmsted boulevards – Mount Baker and Cheasty. In looking at the maps, we realized that redevelopment plans are moving forward, but plans for adding to and enhancing green space in the town center are not. If land is going to be developed for open space, as is called for in numerous planning documents, now is the time to purchase parcels and make plans for how the open space will be developed to the best advantage.

Eliza Davidson

David Dougherty

Ann Hunt

Penny Kriese

Andy Mitton

Looking at the documents prepared over the past several years of planning and community involvement, it becomes clear that open space acquisition and development have been identified as important elements of the redevelopment of the Mount Baker Town Center. The Olmsted boulevards and the development of new open space in the town center have been specifically included in several goals, strategies, and action plans:

Theresa Neylon

Richard Piacentini

Bob Baines, *ex officio*

Kathleen Conner, *Ex Officio*

North Rainier Neighborhood Action Plan (September 2010)

Board of Advisors

Under Goal 6 – "A 'ring of green' surrounds the Town Center"

Jerry Arbes

Policy 6.D.: "Design parks and open spaces and program them to accommodate users of diverse ages, interests and cultures."

John Barber

Policy 6.E.: "address the gaps found in the Parks Gap Analysis"

Susan Black

Strategy 6.1: "Improve and augment the Cheasty and Mt. Baker Boulevard network"

Joan Hockaday

Strategy 6.4 identifies North Rainier for park acquisition

Brooks Kolb

Strategy 6.10 "create additional children's structured and unstructured play areas"

Donald Harris

An Assessment of Gaps in Seattle's Open Space Network: The 2011 Gap Report Update (May 2011)

Gretchen Hull

"Of the Southeast Sector's five urban villages, the North Rainier Hub Urban Village has the largest gaps in Usable Open Space with over half of the urban village located farther than 1/8 mile from park sites." (p. 51)

Douglas Jackson

Nancy Keith

Anne Knight

Kate Krafft

Mount Baker Town Center Urban Design Framework (October 2011)

Sue Nicol

Recommendation: "Create new open space in the core. Use new developments and public improvements to increase greenspace within the Town Center." (p. 22)

Susan Olmsted

Carla Rickerson

Larry Sinnott

Recommendation: "Establish an iconic landmark. The prominent intersection Rainier Avenue S. and MLK Jr. Way S. calls for an iconic civic landmark to strengthen the identity of the not only the Town Center, but the entire Rainier Valley community. The design will benefit from broad community input to ensure the landmark is memorable, meaningful and a source of civic pride." (p. 22)

Summary of Actions:

"Restore the natural and designed landscapes of Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S." (p. 29)

"Reconnect Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S." (p. 29)

"Establish new open space in the core of the Town Center." (p. 30)

We have looked at the planning documents and researched the Olmsted history of this area and would like to make the following recommendations:

- That parcels within the town center be purchased for open space as soon as possible. There are a number of potential locations for open space, but the parcels south of S. Winthrop Street, across from the transit station, offer the best connection between existing green spaces on Beacon Hill and in the Mount Baker neighborhood.
- That the City consider a land bridge to connect Cheasty Boulevard S. (via S. Winthrop Street) and Mount Baker Boulevard S. over the Martin Luther King Jr Way and Rainier Avenue S. intersection, replacing the existing pedestrian overpass. The land bridge could be used by pedestrians of all abilities and bicyclists and could serve as the iconic landmark that is recommended in the Urban Design Framework.

By pursuing this plan, the City will realize a number of goals:

- 1) Connecting Cheasty Boulevard S. and Mount Baker Boulevard S. as intended in the 1903 Olmsted Brothers parks and boulevards system plan.
- 2) Improving access to open space for people of all ages in an underserved area
- 3) Ensuring that open space remains accessible, even as the city grows more densely populated
- 4) Improving pedestrian and bicyclists safety as they move across the wide, busy streets that run through the town center. Commuters moving between the transit center and the neighborhood, students traveling to and from Franklin High School, shoppers moving through the neighborhood, and walkers and bicyclists enjoying the area's large parks, green belts, and parks will all be able to move more easily through the town center and into surrounding neighborhoods.

We welcome the opportunity to speak further with you about this opportunity.

Thank you,



Jennifer Ott
President

cc: Christopher Williams, Department of Parks and Recreation; Talis Abolins, Friends of Mount Baker Town Center