

Laurelhurst Community Club

Serving 2800 Households and Businesses in Seattle's Laurelhurst Neighborhood

March 14, 2005

Libby and Doug Armintrout
3509 43rd Avenue NE
Seattle, Washington 98105

Re: Waterway No. 1

Dear Libby and Doug,

We would like to schedule a meeting of neighbors interested in improvements to Waterway No. 1 soon. Before we do that, the LCC would like to make sure that we understand your preferences for the future of the public space, as well as the preferences of the other adjacent property owners who we have also contacted, and to answer any questions you may have. We have provided background information below about our efforts with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to make sure that you understand where we are in the process. Would you be interested in hosting the meeting of interested neighbors?

When we met with and spoke informally with you over the past several months, you expressed interest in support for a plan developed by consensus of interested neighbors. The LCC has always talked about transforming the area into a drought tolerant, low maintenance herbaceous garden, but neighbors may have other ideas to explore. It could be a phased project—developing and finalizing a plan, undertaking site preparation efforts with the assistance of SDOT's landscape architect, forming a stewardship group of neighbors, upgrading the basketball court, or there may be other possibilities. At this point, we do not know specifics about your preferences or what the Lewis' would like to see happen on the site. We would like to hear your ideas as well as the Lewis' prior to meeting with neighbors.

As for the background, we have briefed you on the LCC's plans in working with DNR and SDOT, but we'd like to put it in writing so that any questions you have may be answered. As you know, the LCC has received complaints about Waterway No. 1 for many years. Much of the year, the lot is an eyesore overgrown with weeds, blackberry bushes and tall grass. There have also been complaints from neighbors about the gradual erosion of the boundaries of the public property for private use by adjacent property owners.

As we've explained, the LCC has been addressing concerns about Waterway No. 1 by working at the state and local level to implement a program similar to the city's highly successful shoreline street end program. In doing so, we hope to work with the city, the state and neighbors to transform the vacant lot into an amenity for the community, while at the same time respecting the privacy of neighbors on each side of the lot. Your efforts in coordinating the Neighborhood Matching Fund grant for the sidewalk extension have been an important first step in promoting pedestrian safety at the vacant lot. We also appreciate your willingness to allow a deduct meter to be installed with your public utility equipment to provide temporary irrigation of new

plantings until the new landscaping is established, an expense the city is willing to assume with implementation of a landscaping plan for Waterway No. 1.

Our approach with Waterway No. 1 is modeled after the shoreline street ends program. The ordinance relating to shoreline street ends states that "shoreline street ends shall be preserved as public rights-of-way, to allow improvement for public uses and access." That law allows adjacent property owners to apply for a permit to use the shoreline street end if conditions are met. Permit fees are then placed in a fund and used for maintenance and improvement of shoreline street ends. One important difference is that the State has proprietary authority over Waterway No. 1. We are working with the state to accomplish its goals for aquatic lands. The state Department of Natural Resources will be in touch with you regarding the required separate state permit.

As we mentioned when we met with you, the LCC developed policies to implement the City's shoreline street end program in 1999 and we will follow these policies in addressing issues relating to state waterways. These policies call for respecting the privacy and working closely with adjacent landowners and developing consensus among neighbors regarding future changes to the public property shoreline area.

Progress on Waterway No. 1 continues. SDOT and the state DNR are working on an agreement to manage the property under rules similar to the shoreline street ends program. You will be hearing from SDOT on the rules that will govern your private use of the public property and the permit fees. The fees are intended to provide incentives to ultimately minimize or eliminate use of the public property by adjacent owners. The fees in the case of Waterway No. 1 would cover the upland area as well as the water portion of the waterway that is in the public area. We know that this will be a gradual process as one of the goals is to respect the privacy of adjacent property owners. But, in the meantime the fees collected will help pay for maintenance and improvement of the public lot.

SDOT's landscape architect has preliminary ideas about creating a meandering pathway to the water and using native and non-native plants to improve the aesthetic character of the site and to improve public safety by facilitating access. The next step is to involve you and the Lewis's and then to hold a meeting of interested neighbors.

Please let us know if you have any questions about preliminary planning for Waterway No. 1, your ideas for improving the site and if you would be willing to host a meeting of neighbors. We have attached a draft flyer describing a future neighbors' meeting for your review and comment. We look forward to working with you on this effort.

Sincerely,



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