

Laurelhurst Community Club

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May 4, 2010

Michael Houser, State Architectural Historian
Washington State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
1063 South Capitol Way, Suite 106
Olympia, Washington 98501

RE: Waterway No. 1, Washington Heritage Register Nomination

Dear Mr. Houser and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation:

The Laurelhurst Community Club Board of Trustees (LCC) offers the following comments on the nomination of Waterway No. 1 in Seattle for historic status. We ask that additional documentation be provided to establish Waterway No. 1 as either an historic site or cultural landscape as proposed. Facts cited in the application should be checked and the adjacent property owners on each side of the waterway should be provided an opportunity to comment on the application. Specifically:

B) Site Access (access, restrictions, etc.):

The Washington Heritage Register Form requires the applicant to list restrictions on the nominated property. While it is unclear what is meant by "restriction," it is important to include mention of the two regulatory permits granted to the adjacent property owners by Seattle's Department of Transportation (SDOT) for the private use of public property. These private uses have continued for decades and were established by prior property owners. A major portion of the waterway remains open to public access. The adjacent property owners should be provided with a copy of the Form that was submitted and given an opportunity to comment.

The Form should also include reference to permitting at the state level. The State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has recently completed the environmental review process for permitting of a portion of the south side of the waterway. Permitting and environmental review for the north side area is pending. The permit fees calculated based upon fair market value provide important revenue to support public schools, universities and other state institutions and are pursued by DNR as steward of our state-owned public lands.

Finally, the Form should mention the Right of Entry Agreement between DNR and LCC. The Agreement, executed in June 2008 authorizes LCC to undertake maintenance and improvements to the waterway within the guidelines set up by DNR.

Category of Property/Area of Significance:

Additional information is necessary to establish the waterway as an historic site and/or cultural landscape and the areas of significance noted on the form.

G) Property Description:

The applicant provides a good description of the waterway in this portion of the Form. Clarification and corrections should be made, however, in the final paragraph of that section. It should be noted that the boat-launching area referenced should specifically refer to launching of non-motorized boats. Installation of several large, granite, slip-resistant rocks was undertaken by LCC with assistance of SDOT and DNR, both in the permitting process and implementation of the project.

The applicant also mentions that there is a grass lawn and playfield. Currently, there is grassy, weed-infested area at the waterway. It cannot really be characterized as a lawn and it is an overstatement to say that it is a playfield. LCC's Waterway No. 1 Enhancement Project calls for removal of the existing grasses and weeds. Eventually, there will be a lawn area for kids to play.

The applicant states that the area is "undergoing restoration with native plants common to Union Bay before 1850." This is neither part of the concept plan endorsed by neighbors and adopted by LCC nor the terms of the Right of Entry Agreement between DNR and LCC. The Right of Entry Agreement calls for native vegetation, trees and other vegetation approved by DNR. There is no mention of native plants common before 1850, or plants that have been naturalized over the years. Also, as part of the project implemented to improve safety for launching of non-motorized boats, bank stabilization plants that had been installed disappeared, as well as native rose bushes at the top of the bank to guard against children falling onto the cement sewer outlet below. These issues will be addressed in the future.

H) Significance:

Fact checking and additional research is necessary for this section of the Form. For example, the first paragraph states that "Today, Waterway No. 1 is the only remaining boat landing in this network that exists as a public park." The applicant prepared an earlier historical piece with similar information. At the time, LCC asked Christine Barrett, the Laurelhurst historian and author of *A History of Laurelhurst*, to review the document. In comments provided to the applicant, Christine Barrett commented:

"The author over speaks. In the late 19th century, Hazel Landing was the only access. Beginning with the various developments in the early 20th century, Landing #1, #2 and the

Palisades landings were added. To my knowledge, all these remain visible to the visitor who cares to look.”

It is also not appropriate to characterize Waterway No. 1 as a park. While that is our goal with implementation of the Waterway No. 1 Enhancement Project, DNR describes the area in the Right of Entry Agreement as follows:

“The waterway is commonly used to access Lake Washington and as open public space.”

The historical information provided about Laurelhurst is very interesting, but much of that information does not relate to the waterway and in other places clarifications must be made. With so much historical information provided, it is difficult to determine exactly the location of the various stages of Laurelhurst development over the years and how they relate to the waterway. Listing of who sold and bought various parcels in Laurelhurst, the amount of their mortgage, who and when folks got married and much of the anecdotal information does not seem to be relevant to designation of the waterway as historical. Mentioning important people in the neighborhood such as Dan Evans, Bill Gates and Gary Larsen and providing stories about events or their perceptions should only be included with permission of those mentioned.

On page 6, the applicant notes that “Elmer White would play a lead role in creating a public park at Waterway No. 1.” Documentation of this is important. LCC has no records about transformation of the waterway into a park. As for the basketball court, the anecdotal information that we have indicates that Elmer White had leftover asphalt from another project and used it to create the basketball court for his son decades ago with no government approvals. The basketball court has been an asset to the neighborhood and well-used over the years. It will be resurfaced as part of the Waterway No. 1 Enhancement Project.

In other materials prepared by the applicant, she notes the following:

“January 19, 1948, the LCC Waterfront and Recreation Committee proposed the basic plan for construction of a waterfront park at Waterway 1. In 1949, with approval from the Port of Seattle, LCC hired Dr. John Hanley, Horticultural Consultant, to design the waterway park. They paid \$110 for roto-tilling, grading, raking, and seeding the park with clover.”

This is very interesting information and we have asked for copies of the historical documents that were relied upon, but they have not been provided.

On page 9, the applicant notes that the waterway “played the role of the village green” and states that the City’s Department of Parks and Recreation mowed the grass in the 70’s. Documentation is needed to substantiate that neighbors celebrated holidays and had neighborhood picnics at the

waterway in the 70's as stated. SDOT has regulatory authority over the waterway, rather than the Parks Department. If the Parks Department had a history of mowing the waterway, this is important to know so that LCC could call upon their services in the future.

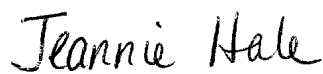
At the beginning of the applicant's Form, she notes one area of significance as "The property is associated with legends, spiritual or religious practices, or life ways which are uniquely related to a piece of land or to a natural feature." Two other items are checked in that portion of the form including "The property is directly connected to specific activities or events which had a lasting impact on the community or region."

Aside from information about the Laurelhurst Launch, there is little information about Native American villages and artifacts. The villages and longhouses referenced are a distance from the waterway. The artifact found in a neighbor's yard across the street from the waterway is interesting and the Laurelhurst historian suggested that it could be from Arizona or Africa and that its age and provenance should be established.

On page 11, the applicant notes the presence of such plants as sword ferns and kinikinnick, plants well-known to indigenous people and used by Native Americans at the waterway (along with other mentioned plants). The ferns and kinikinnick were recently planted. It would be useful to have historical information about Native Americans at the waterway, how and whether they used the site and what plants they used.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the nomination of Waterway No. 1 as historic. We hope you will ensure that the application is complete and factually accurate and that adjacent property owners have the opportunity to participate in your process. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



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