

Laurelhurst Community Club

Serving 2800 Households in Seattle's Laurelhurst Neighborhood

February 18, 1998

Mayor Paul Schell
City of Seattle
1200 Municipal Building
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Mayor Schell,

Traffic, parking and safety issues at University Village have become major problems for the Laurelhurst community. Many of our neighbors report that they choose to shop elsewhere due to traffic, congestion, inadequate parking and safety concerns for both cars and pedestrians. Streets bordering the Village have become hazardous due to the increase in traffic volume and congestion. With all of the new construction and expansion planned, these problems will worsen and we are asking for your assistance. Other neighborhoods undoubtedly have the same concerns.

We are concerned that development at University Village has been proceeding on a piecemeal basis with no environmental review or requirement to mitigate adverse impacts associated with development, something required of other developers for projects of this magnitude. We request that **no further building permits be granted to University Village or no further construction or remodeling be allowed until an environmental review is undertaken.**

It appears to us that there are differing interpretations as to whether the SEPA thresholds are triggered by development so as to require an environmental review. The series of "remodels" at University Village are essentially new and expanded construction items with little thought to the enormous impacts of the new development on surrounding communities. We have been told that University Village architects have calculated to the square inch what pieces of an existing building must be retained to come within the DCLU threshold for SEPA review--in some cases this may be a wall or footprint of an existing building. Nor, has University Village development been subject to Design Review. We hope we can count on you to ensure enforcement of the spirit and intent of our environmental laws.

Costs to the City could be considerable without immediate action. For example, comments from University Village to the draft University Community Urban Center Plan recommend that the City pay the expenses associated with traffic and transportation impacts of University Village development--costs that other developers ordinarily bear as a condition of the various permit approvals. While the plan is in draft form, comments from University Village consultants on January 30, 1998 state:

"Traffic studies should be funded by the City to analyze traffic flow on NE 45th, 25th NE, and Montlake, and to propose improvements to transit service, pedestrian accessibility, bicycle safety and convenience, and vehicular safety and service levels. Shuttle service for University Village employees should be encouraged. Installation of a new traffic signal at 45th and at the QFC curbcut, and a pedestrian crosswalk at that location, should be considered. In addition, opportunities for improved and expanded parking for University Village shoppers, employees, and residents should be encouraged."

While the University Community Urban Center Plan has not been finalized, the possibility exists that taxpayers could foot the bill for traffic and transportation mitigation that most developers assume as a cost of doing business.

We have been attending the University Village Parking Task Force meetings and are aware that the Village is now taking steps to encourage employees to park offsite. While this effort is important, the overwhelming impact is from the traffic generated by the increase in customers. Employee parking problems are just an index of the overall increase in traffic generated by the University Village expansion and remodeling.

We hope that you will be able to provide assistance in resolving problems associated with University Village continued development without adequate environmental review. Thank you for considering the concerns of the Laurelhurst Community Club. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jeannie Hale

Jeannie Hale, President
3425 West Laurelhurst Drive NE
Seattle, Washington 98105
206-525-5135 / FAX 206-525-9631
jeannieh@serv.net

cc: Seattle City Councilmembers
Rick Krochalis, Department of Construction and Land Use
Jim Diers, Department of Neighborhoods
