



The Valley View

Newsletter of the Greater Madison Valley Community Council

Issue 77, August/September 1999

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President's View

by Gary Emslie

September is upon us and we've hardly had a summer. Let's hope these few brilliant days will continue as we enter the school year and begin our carpools, soccer practice, and dance classes.

Our neighborhood has been busy this summer. Work is now finished on the substation and bus shelter at 34th and Denny (see article inside). Resurfacing is complete on 32nd Avenue East from the boulevard to Denny Way (good news) but now the speed of traffic there is too fast (bad news) and the drainage work to control water runoff along 32nd was not accomplished. We are urging the City to finish this job promptly. While they were at it they should have paved Denny from 32nd to 34th which is full of potholes and is dangerous.

The Seattle Council on Airport Affairs (SCAA) has been busy seeking alternatives to the noisy overflight problem, and the coalition to stop major redevelopment of the Arboretum has been meeting with City and Parks Department officials.

The July courtyard sale was a big success again this year. Its proceeds help the council fund this newsletter and many other activities.

We must report sadly the passing of Pearl Castle on July 31. She was a longtime leader of this council and originator of many of our traditions including this courtyard sale. She organized the 80th anniversary reunion of M.L.King School in 1993. Pearl's memorial was held at the King School auditorium. Condolences to the Castle family.

On a happy note, many of us attended a grand catered party honoring Esther Fields who retired after 23 years as a Metro bus driver.

Two hundred people came to wish her well.

Our first council meeting this fall will be held on Tuesday, September 21 in the portable at M.L. King. A speaker from Schools First will explain the upcoming school levy. As always, if you have ideas or proposals for the Council to act on, come to the meeting or call me directly at 324-7139. ▼▼

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The Great Madison Valley Land Boom

by Jack Irwin

We sat down recently with real estate agents at two companies that work in our area and asked what it's all about. Here is our pocket of a neighborhood south of Madison where little houses without basements, built for war workers and the early black settlers of our city, are selling for \$200,000 and up.

The views we enjoy might include the forest horizon of the Arboretum or the Harrison greenbelt, but most of us

see the neat rows of houses on the valley floor or the many apartment buildings marching up toward 23rd. Each year therains flood our backyards and we have mud at the front door. In today'smarket none of this matters. Buyers with high tech stock options and big paying jobs (or wealthy parents) are scouring the city for houses. This neighborhood may be one of Seattle's fastest appreciating areas with a riseof 30% in house prices in the last two years. Where competing bids above an asking price were once rare,

now they come every week.

Here's why people come here: we have easy access to downtown, bus lines, I-5, the two lake bridges, and the university. High quality restaurants and shops crowd Madison Street. Costs here are still below other areas and today's buyers have the cash to do large renovations and to expand modest houses to new proportions.

Will this wave roll on forever? The agents we talked to are relatively young. The Great Depression is to them a medieval event and even the

(Continued on page 3)

Bus Shelter Completed

by Bob Crittenden

The bus shelter at 34th and Denny is completed and the community - and Metro - are the winners. About a year ago, Metro was planning to remove a prematurely aging bus stop shelter and a structure that housed a rectifier for the #2 trolley and replace the relatively pleasing wood structure with a cement brick structure.

Metro had forgotten the history of that building. They forgot how the community had insisted in the late seventies that the land owned by the community would be sold to Metro and the sales revenue contributed back to Metro IF Metro would build a rectifier structure and bus shelter that would fit into the architecture of the neighborhood and if they maintained the structure and grounds. They did build a structure that met that agreement, but poor building methods had doomed the structure and it needed replacement. Unfortunately, Metro's proposal last year was not consistent with their previous agreement.

A number of neighbors who were here when the first agreement was made and many who have moved here since that time actively worked to change Metro's plans. A large gathering of neighbors met in a local home with representatives of Metro. Following that first meeting, a second was held with a group of Metro people including Metro's Judy Riley. Harley Bird who had made the arrangements with Metro twenty years ago, Bob Henry who attended the first meetings, Leolia Brooks who has always been heard on her views, Hunt Towler who lives across the street from the structure, Raquel Bird who lives next door, Eli Stahlhut, and I attended that meeting. Hunt laid out some possible design options that met our criteria. The clear voices of the people attending, a diverse and strong group, quickly convinced Metro of the value of our suggestions. Judy Riley of Metro was pleasant to work with and an agreement was made that called for a structure that fit into the neighborhood and would be maintained. The neighborhood group was reasonable in agreeing to the design needs of Metro to have a non-flammable structure, and Metro understood our need for a reasonably pleasing design, grounds and maintenance.

The structure and grounds are now complete and the result lives up to our agreement. We are very pleased and appreciate Metro's willingness to be flexible to our community needs. We also believe that the quality and beauty of the structure is a feather in the cap of Metro and makes use of the bus much more enjoyable.

If you have the opportunity to walk by the new bus stop, sit on the bench, relax, enjoy a pleasant little space, and send good thoughts to some of your neighbors and Metro staff. ▼▼



Our Local Scene: Julia Lee's Park

by Miriam Roskin

Next time you're wandering through Madison Valley's main commercial strip, take a look at the corner of Martin Luther King Way and East Harrison Street. There you'll find a "vest pocket park" - a smallish green gem in the midst of one of our neighborhood's busier intersections.

This park is dedicated to Julia Lee Knudsen, who was born in Seattle in 1925 and lived in the Washington Park neighborhood for much of her adult life. After Mrs. Knudsen passed away in 1990, her husband, Cal Knudsen, struck upon the idea of purchasing a brambly empty lot and building a park in Julia Lee's memory. Development of the park realized one of Julia Lee's own wishes, for she had dreamed of building a park like this in her mother's memory.

Julia Lee's park resembles the sort of private park that tends to be crammed into unlikely corners throughout London. Like these small green spaces in London, Julia Lee's park is privately owned and operated. Unlike many of the London parks, it is open to the public at all times.

And the public seems to enjoy it. Mr. Knudsen maintains an office right across the street, and he sees both younger and older neighbors sauntering through, bringing small children to play, inspecting the plantings, or chatting with friends on the benches. He receives occasional letters from people who say how much they enjoy driving by the park each morning en route to work.

One of Mr. Knudsen's early findings was that you can build a park almost anywhere, regardless of whether the property is zoned for residential, commercial, or even industrial use. A few bureaucratic headaches attended the design and construction process, but in general, Mr. Knudsen found the City to be very cooperative. The City welcomed the new park, especially given the assurance that it would not impose any new maintenance burdens on City crews. Mr. Knudsen even received a thank you note from then-mayor Norm Rice following the ribbon cutting in 1993.

Local architect Glen Takagi and landscape designer Ann Smith Hunter designed the park. Mrs. Hunter contributed many mature shrubs and trees, so the park never had a scrawny upstart look; the plantings are filled in and the park looks as if it's been there for a long time. The plantings provide year-round interest, but like most of Seattle, springtime is especially lovely, with azaleas, rhododendrons, and trochodendrons in full bloom. Mrs. Hunter also selected plantings that would require relatively little maintenance; there is no grass to mow, and none of the flowering bushes require constant deadheading. The annual cost of operating the park runs approximately \$12,000, with raking, pruning, and general maintenance taking place on a weekly basis.

Stroll, linger, and enjoy. ▼▼

Land Boom, continued

near demise of Boeing in 1970 is outside their ken. No, they are optimistic with only faint reservations. Their industry is thriving with the regional economy. Houses and building lots are scarce. They see openings for more lowrise apartments on the rise west of the valley, and town houses densely placed on single family plots. The escalating cost of home ownership as well as rentals is a matter they don't know how to solve: where will lower income people go? There were few suggestions about keeping our valued mix of economic levels and black and white neighbors. It was in this neighborhood in segregation time that visiting greats like Paul Robeson would find a welcome when Seattle hotels would not let him in. Right here, a block from M.L.King School!

Does this prosperity mean an end to integrated communities? Write in to this newsletter to let us know what you see around you, and how you think we could fix things better. ▼▼

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M. L. King County?

by Jerry Sussman

Back in 1986 our County Council voted 5 to 4 to declare that our county was thenceforward to be named for Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights hero and Nobel Peace Prize winner. We were named originally in 1852 by the Oregon Territorial Legislature (seeking statehood at the time) for the newly elected Vice President William King. That gentleman left little mark on history for he fell ill before he was sworn in and died within a year.

Today Larry Gossett, our district County Councilman, wants to see official recognition of the M.L. King designation. This change would mean replacing the crown symbol which currently appears on all county vehicles, stationery, and the county flag, with the likeness of Dr. King. The costs would be too great, say some skeptics on the 13-member council, where Republicans outnumber Democrats 7 to 6. Mr. Gossett is a Democrat. Opponents say we may face budget cuts occasioned by I-695, a tax-reduction measure that will appear on the November ballot. Cuts might come in just those areas that Dr. King would want to protect: housing and services for lower income people.

Yet Mr. Gossett holds his ground. Think what these images would show about us, he says: "President George Washington, an Anglo-American; Chief Sealth, a Native American; and Dr. Martin Luther King, an African American, on our state, city and county flags." These figures are potent symbols of our strength and belief in democracy, and we need them all, Mr. Gossett insists. ▼▼

(Note: This story had national coverage in the N.Y. Times on September 5.)



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Your submissions are appreciated! Mail to the address above.

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Next Community Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 1999, 7:30 p.m.

Martin Luther King School
in the portables

3201 East Republican St. (parking available on playfield)



WANTED: WRITERS, STORIES, PROJECT IDEAS



This paper relies on contributions from readers. We need stories you'd like to share, reports about good happenings or bad days, news of how the City is messing up or doing right. They (Department of Neighborhoods and other grant people) are eager to give money away for community work. Poems, good yarns, even recipes, we will print! See the P.O.Box no. and the E-mail! Write!

Trees Seeking a Good Home

I have a few hand-raised (from seed) Giant Sequoia trees. They're each about 18 months old and a foot tall. This fall would be a good time to plant them. Giant Sequoias need room, as they are the largest (but not tallest) trees in the world.

They are magnificent evergreens, and do very well in Seattle. There is a small grove of them in the arboretum, and a beauty in a yard in Madison Park.

Free to a good home; please request via email (jules@oz.net) or 206/323-4569.



Proposal for an Arts and Creative Works Fair

To round out our calendar of yearly events and gatherings, members of our council are planning an arts fair and sale. The variety of craft work, painting, jewelry making and music that is done in this community is impressive.

To recognize and promote these activities the Community Council is proposing to Principal Euhania Butler of King School that we present a display and sale of the work of local artists, amateur and professional, at an appropriate time in spring or fall. The show might run several evenings and a Saturday. It could serve as a valuable new community focus and could bring some income for M. L. King's art and music program.

If you would like to help organize or participate in this venture, call Eli at 322-7196 or Peggy at 325-6308.