

To: Seattle City Council
From: Riverview Neighborhood Council
Re: Budget Resolution 30715 Soundway West Property

Underscored portions of this letter are quotations from Resolution Number 30715 of The Seattle City Council.

As residents of the Riverview neighborhood and members of the Riverview Neighborhood Council, we have been following the City process with regard to the Soundway property for several years now. It was always clear that part of the property was being studied for potential housing development, though we maintain hope that this never was and still isn't a foregone conclusion.

Reasons to keep the entire Soundway Property as greenspace:

1. “The Soundway property is located within the Designated Greenspace Boundary of the West Duwamish Greenbelt.” The property is Designated Greenspace. The rapid increase of housing already occurring in the neighborhood and the adverse impacts of the West Marginal industrial/manufacturing area to the east more than justify the City's continued protection of existing greenspace as a buffer, wildlife habitat, and public amenity, particularly Designated Greenspace that is already publicly owned.
2. This part of the West Duwamish Greenbelt offers significant access and connection to the community, specifically because of its location “on top of the plateau occupied by the existing residential community and the South Seattle Community College.”

Maintained as greenspace, these seven acres offer a unique opportunity to focus the identity of this evolving urban park. The site provides much needed public access for increased on-going restoration efforts in the greenbelt, and opportunities for public stewardship and public awareness. Ultimately, it could help to create an example for restoration efforts city-wide and beyond. As evidenced by the restoration work of rTrip, the Nature Consortium, hundreds of volunteers, and this year's highly successful West Duwamish Environmental Summit, community groups are actively involved in saving this buffer from turning into an ivy and blackberry-dominated jungle, and establishing a legacy for future generations. We would like to see Soundway as part of that legacy.

3. Conservationists and naturalists have observed that significant native habitat and wildlife continue to survive in this relatively undisturbed area. (We are happy to provide itemized lists.)

Reasons not to develop housing on the Soundway Property:

1. There is already a housing boom occurring in the neighborhood. The following developments are proposed or in process within two miles of Soundway:

Sylvan Way	196 units of townhouses
Croft Place	28 units of townhouses
High Point	1600 units (town homes & detached)
Orchard Corner on Webster	21 detached homes
Crawford (between Delridge & 21st)	20+ units

These add up to 1865 new units within these two miles and do not include all the new and proposed housing in the area. In addition, the City has estimated that 39 detached homes could be built amongst the Environmentally Critical Areas of the Soundway property proposed to be sold for private development.

2. There is no new infrastructure proposed to support what could be at least 2000 new households within this two mile radius. Impacts to traffic, transportation, schools and other infrastructure issues remain unaddressed. In addition, all this new density includes no provision for new transit, or for grocery and other shopping nodes within walking distance to any of the housing. What should be an “urban village” is being left to sprawl and become increasingly car-bound like a suburb.

3. The Soundway property that is proposed to be sold is undeveloped. Who pays for the new infrastructure that would be needed there: sewer, water, roadway, storm drainage, gas, electrical?

4. In the Soundway property housing scheme as presented by the City, increased traffic could change the character of an entire neighborhood. The proposed 39 households would access their single family homes off SW Holly St by cutting through quiet streets, many of them narrow, without curbs or sidewalks.

5. The revenue from the sale of the property does not justify the loss of the greenspace or the impact on the neighborhood. It is a short-term gain, quickly spent, if the sale proceeds.

6. Keeping this land in the public domain as greenspace is integral to the Delridge District Neighborhood Plan. This sale does not acknowledge key recommendations of that Plan. We believe that the City should honor the Plan and that other revenues should be sought to fund the projects that would otherwise have benefited from the sale of Soundway.

Riverview and its contiguous neighborhoods, including Puget Ridge, Pigeon Point, Highland Park and Delridge, have been largely ignored by the City until recently, and in the past ten years considerable development has occurred without any apparent comprehensive planning.

Our neighborhoods determine the character of our city. We believe that the City must recognize and value the character of our neighborhoods, and listen to the people who live in them. We want our City government to offer creative solutions to the increasing problems of growth and its effect on our environment.

If all efforts to save the land for greenspace fail, please protect our neighborhood:

If the City decides that the portion of the Soundway properties west of the 13th Avenue SW right-of-way is to be put up for sale to private housing developers, certain “additional conditions” would help to mitigate the considerable impact of the potential development on the neighborhood. These statements should not be taken as concessions that can be made to make the loss of greenspace acceptable. These conditions are the lifeboats which will make the loss of the ship have less impact:

1. In addition to the Environmentally Critical Areas provisions, require that project buildings and site be designed and built per sustainable “green” building standards, with minimal site, vegetation and wildlife impacts, with an integrated multi-purpose trail (see #2 below).
2. Per Resolution Number 30715, solidify the City's intent to work with citizens and affected property owners towards the accommodation of a trail, the proposed Riverview Trail which has been a goal of rTrip (Riverview Trail Improvement Project) since the fall of 2000. Require that the Builder construct the trail per rTrip Master Plan specifications and stipulate that the Trail be perpetually accessible by the general public.
3. Require a less intrusive access point to the site, from SW Morgan St, while maintaining a dead-ended cul-de-sac north of SW Holly St, so as to prevent shortcut traffic through the existing Riverview neighborhood.

Having said this, we continue to believe that this publicly owned property remains highly valuable to the citizens of Seattle as protected greenspace, and we therefore would like to add our voices to those who are asking the City to reconsider the resolution to sell the Soundway Property to private housing developers.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Residents of the Riverview Neighborhood
Members of the Riverview Neighborhood Council