

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL
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October 14, 2014

John Owen, Partner
Makers Architecture and Urban Design

Milenko Matanovic,
Pomegranate Center

Via email

Dear Mr. Owen and Mr. Matanovic -

I am writing to provide you with the letter of support for the late Professor Phil Thiel's proposal for a plaza/open space at the site of the U-District Light Rail station that the University District Community Council sent to the Sound Transit Board just over two years ago (pasted and attached - apologies for any formatting errors that occur in the pasted version).

The only thing that has really changed in the intervening time is that the UW and Sound Transit did a deal to swap the air rights above the station with minimal public notice (let alone input), and DPD's recent planning initiative (which the UW has had a major hand in) to raise building heights in much of our neighborhood up to 340'. Both of these actions actually strengthen the case that the light rail station is by far the best possible location for the centrally-located open space that has long been identified as the most pressing parks need in the University District in numerous planning studies.

We would also add that the U of W is a public agency, and that while they have their mission and priorities they still also must fit those plans into the larger framework of public needs in our community. Moreover, at tonight's meeting of the City-University Community Advisory Committee (CUCAC), the UW is introducing their request for a "Minor Campus Master Plan Amendment" to add a new building site for a dorm to replace the existing older (and cheaper) dorms in the North Campus, which would eliminate the tennis courts next to Denny Field.

The UW was previously granted a similar plan amendment by DPD to move Cunningham Hall onto a section of Parrington Green, and it took a full-court press from the CUCAC and other community members to keep them from putting a new building on Denny Lawn next to Savery Hall a few years ago. The UW Campus cannot be considered open space for community planning purposes because it is not eligible for consideration as such under DPD guidelines, it is not welcoming to the general public, and also because there is no guarantee that much of it will actually remain there after the next UW Campus Master Plan (or the one after that, or the one after that) is implemented.

We appreciate your attention to these comments, and look forward to working with you to develop the sort of centrally-located community gathering space that has long been envisioned for the University District. The UDCC also supports a broad spectrum of smaller open spaces and streetscape improvements, but cannot and will not stand by if the attempt to implement those is used as an excuse or distraction to ignore the larger need for a real centrally-located open space in our community.

Sincerely,

Matt Fox,
President