

Chapter II.

THE EASTLAKE PLANNING PROCESS

Communities flourish when decisions are made close to the people. Eastlake Tomorrow is a neighborhood planning effort led by a broad coalition of residents, organizations, business owners and employees, and property owners. With some City funds and assistance from consultants, but mainly with donated time and resources, the neighborhood has identified areas of consensus for action by government and our own self-help. A list of the many people and contributions that made this neighborhood planning effort possible is provided in Appendix A: Acknowledgments, 1996-98.

Eastlake Tomorrow got started years ago, and it helped inspire neighborhood planning elsewhere. A theme throughout Eastlake Planning has been broad outreach and conciliation, on the principle that the City is most likely to approve a neighborhood plan that has widespread support among diverse stakeholders.

1. Eastlake Planning Before 1996

The most important influences on Eastlake's development were the following public projects: street car lines (1893), Seward School (1893), Lake Washington Ship Canal (1917), and Interstate 5 (1962). Eastlake development was also significantly influenced by the City's first zoning code, which designated all of Eastlake's residential land as available for the construction of apartments (1923).

Eastlake's first neighborhood planning process was initiated by the Eastlake Community Council in 1974, and resulted in the Eastlake "Goals and Policies", which were recognized in a 1979 Seattle City Council resolution. Topics addressed by the Goals and Policies included housing and zoning, economic development, transportation, recreation, human resources, and citizen participation. Rezoning was the major planning activity in the 1980s. City-led public processes revised Eastlake's residential zoning in 1982 and 1989-90, and neighborhood commercial zoning in 1986.

Through the initiative of the Eastlake Community Council, the Eastlake Tomorrow neighborhood planning process began in 1991. With the help of the City's Neighborhood Matching Fund, a 1992 survey of businesses and residents (335 respondents) was conducted to assess neighborhood needs and concerns. With a second grant, a town meeting/visual preference survey, design charrettes, and 150 in-depth interviews helped produce a Community Design Framework, a version of which appeared as a December 1992 insert in the *Lake Union Review*

(now the *Seattle Press*). Additional City grants funded the 1994 Eastlake Transportation Plan, which included 1) a survey (175 respondents), a response form on the recommendations (190 respondents), and several public meetings, and 2) the South Gateway planning effort, which produced a major sculpture at the intersection of Eastlake Avenue East and Fairview Avenue North.

The Eastlake Tomorrow process was conducted simultaneously with the City's comprehensive planning process. The Eastlake example, along with other successful neighborhood plans elsewhere, helped convince the City in 1994 to strengthen its commitment to neighborhood planning. In fact, Eastlake became one model for how the City encouraged neighborhoods to approach planning. With the availability of technical and financial assistance through the Neighborhood Planning Office, Eastlake conducted a new public process including a 1995 survey and public workshop that led to the decision to contract with the City for the current cycle of neighborhood planning.

2. Planning and Outreach

Eastlake Tomorrow's City contract (the first phase contract, for \$10,000, was signed May 13, 1996; the second phase contract, for \$70,000, was signed March 19, 1997) recognized the accomplishments of Eastlake's recent neighborhood planning, especially regarding transportation. Eastlake was encouraged to move ahead on the existing planning recommendations while working to revalidate and supplement them. Several work items in the contract were to complete projects begun under earlier planning.

The City contract for Eastlake Tomorrow was with the Eastlake Community Council. However, under a separate agreement between the Eastlake Community Council and the Eastlake Tomorrow Steering Committee, the Steering Committee acted independently. The Steering Committee included one seat each for apartment owners, homeowners, renters, office owners, social services, six topical planning teams, and the following organizations: Eastlake Business Association, Eastlake Community Council, Floating Homes Association, the Options Program at Seward (TOPS), and Friends of Lake Union/Olmsted-Fairview Park Commission (shared seat). See Appendix A: Acknowledgments, 1996-98 for a list of Steering Committee members.

The Steering Committee adopted procedures establishing that its total seats could not be changed without a two-thirds vote of all members, and no change was ever made. The procedures also provided that, although parliamentary procedure would govern, the Committee would encourage consensus and avoid narrow margin votes on important issues. The Steering Committee adopted "job descriptions" of what it expected from its own members and what it expected from those in charge of the planning teams. All meetings of the Steering Committee were held at Hart Crowser, Northwest Administrators, or NOAA.

In two and a half years of planning, Eastlake Tomorrow published four newsletters (May and July, 1996; August and October, 1997), the April 1998 Options Guide, and the August 1998 validation brochure. Eastlake Tomorrow also established and updated a web site (<http://www.oo.net/et>) and maintained public review files at Lake Union Mail and the Floating Homes Association. Articles on Eastlake Tomorrow also appeared in every issue of the *Eastlake*

News between 1996 and 1998, as well as in the newsletters of the Portage Bay/Roanoke Park Community Council, the Floating Homes Association, and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. The March 8, 1997 neighborhood section of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* featuring Eastlake publicized the Eastlake Tomorrow web site, the mailing address, and an April 8 public meeting on transportation.

A four-page September 1996 Eastlake Tomorrow survey was filled out by 402 residents, many of whom provided written comments as well; some of the questionnaires were filled out via the web site. A questionnaire in the April 1998 Options Guide received 85 responses. Coding and analysis for both questionnaires were donated by Gilmore Research. Additional questionnaires were also distributed by the Main Street, North Gateway, and Open Space planning teams, and in the August 1998 validation brochure.

Inventories were conducted by volunteers for the Community Design and Open Space planning teams. The Eastlake Tomorrow Steering Committee led an August 3, 1998 Executive tour of the neighborhood for heads and representatives of City departments. Earlier neighborhood tours were led by the Community Design, Open Space, and Transportation planning teams. Work parties were organized by the Open Space and North Gateway planning teams.

Hundreds of public meetings, workshops, and committee meetings were held, including a kickoff event (May 22, 1996), two open houses (September 24 and October 1, 1996), a town meeting (October 22, 1996), a September 20, 1997 showcase event, two options fairs (April 22 and 25, 1998), and the September 8, 1998 validation fair. The planning teams conducted many other events, which are described in later chapters.

A draft of the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan recommendations in matrix form for City review and response was submitted on June 16, 1998, and a revised version followed on June 22. Chapter IV of the draft plan (Community Design) went to the City on July 1; all other chapters went to the City on June 23. A validation brochure detailing the Eastlake Plan and advertising the September 8 validation event was mailed throughout the neighborhood and to nonresident stakeholders. The draft Plan was posted on the Eastlake Tomorrow web site, and placed at eight public places in the neighborhood as well as at the Fremont Neighborhood Service Center and the downtown and University Heights branches of the Seattle Public Library. It was also available for purchase at a special price from G&H Printing.

Final revisions to the Plan were made during the second week of September 1998 prior to presenting the final plan and adoption package to the City Council Neighborhoods Committee on September 22. City Council members will be given a tour of the neighborhood September 25, and a City Council public hearing is scheduled for October 19. The City Council committee will discuss the Plan November 3 and could vote on it as early as December 8, with a full Council vote possible on December 14, 1998.

3. Early Results from the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan

The Eastlake Tomorrow neighborhood planning process produced significant neighborhood improvements even prior to City Council action on the plan. As of August 18, 1998, the following had been accomplished.

Landscaped Medians on Eastlake Avenue

The 1994 Transportation Plan recommended medians and a center turn lane on Eastlake Avenue. As part of Phase I neighborhood planning, volunteers secured property owner agreement and the Seattle Transportation Department prepared the preliminary design for medians and a center turn lane north of Hamlin Street. Three landscaped medians and the center turn lane were installed in 1997 by Seattle Public Utilities as part of a major sewer expansion project.

North Gateway Triangle Park

Another part of the 1996-97 sewer expansion project and the Eastlake Tomorrow planning process was the rehabilitation of the North Gateway triangle park, which had been used for staging construction equipment. Consistent with recommendations in the 1994 Transportation Plan, the park improvements were made with funds from Seattle Public Utilities, guidance from Seattle Transportation, and design assistance from the North Gateway planning team, whose volunteers also helped to plant the park. These improvements are the first step toward realizing the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan's vision of an attractive, identifiable gateway between the adjoining neighborhoods of Eastlake, Portage Bay/Roanoke Park, and the University District.

Community Art Projects

Using a combination of funds from the same sewer project's "% for Art" program and from the Neighborhood Matching Fund, Eastlake commissioned and installed two major art projects along Eastlake Avenue. The "Dreamboats" embody the relationship of the Eastlake community to maritime activity on its shores, while the "Cornerstones" cleverly reflect the funding source—sewer expansion—by depicting different microorganisms.

Fairview Avenue Walkway, Parking and Topographic Survey

The 1996-97 sewer expansion project and Phase II planning work also included the installation of a two block landscaped walkway and more efficient parking along the west side of Fairview Avenue E. in front of NOAA. This project was carefully negotiated with abutting property owners, and the design jointly developed by community volunteers (including donated architectural services), Seattle Transportation and a University of Washington landscape architecture design studio.

In addition, community volunteers, City staff and UW students completed a conceptual walkway design for the remainder of Fairview Avenue E., south of NOAA to Fairview Avenue N., with a public/private partnership for funding the project. To help with the final detailed design, Seattle Transportation prepared the area's first-ever topographic survey.

Rogers Playfield and Franklin Avenue Green Street

Another work item in Eastlake's Phase II planning process was the development of a design for Rogers Playfield and the closed block of Franklin Avenue that is between the Playfield and

Seward School. This work was included in Phase II to piggy-back on the School District's design and construction work for Seward School, which is being expanded and renovated. The community, City Parks and Transportation departments, TOPS, and the School District (aided by their landscape architect consultant) participated in a community process that resulted in an agreed-upon design for improvement and use of Rogers Playfield and the Franklin block, which will be designated a Type IV green street—the first green street outside of the Downtown area. The School District will be finding many of the improvements, and a Neighborhood Matching Fund application will be submitted in September for additional green street improvements.

Eastlake Avenue Main Street Activities

Creating an attractive, vibrant main street with businesses and housing is an important focus of the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan and community. During the planning process, the Main Street planning team organized a successful, one-day experiment with a farmer's market in the neighborhood, in anticipation of a future, more permanent market. The team also organized volunteers to help clean up and maintain blocks along Eastlake Avenue, and several abandoned vehicles have been removed as a result of the cleanup efforts.

I-5 Noise Reduction

One of the critical issues affecting the quality of life in Eastlake is the noise generated by traffic on I-5. In consultation with the Transportation planning team (and as recommended in the 1994 Eastlake Transportation Plan), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) reduced the hours of operation of the I-5 express lanes during the nighttime, thereby reducing noise from the Ship Canal Bridge. As a result of Transportation planning team efforts, WSDOT has also agreed to restore the Ship Canal Bridge to high priority status for noise mitigation (after initially dropping the area from its priority funding list).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Counts

One of the goals of the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan is to encourage pedestrian and bicycle modes of travel. Prompted by Eastlake Tomorrow, the Seattle Transportation Department and the University of Washington conducted a pedestrian/bicycle count across the University Bridge—the first count done in decades.

Fairview Olmsted Park Street Crossing

Permits for the construction of Fairview Olmsted Park improvements required standard street modifications, including curbs and gutters on both sides of Fairview, and a metal barrier on the shoreline side of the street. However, the Eastlake Neighborhood Plan recommends a Type III green street and no curbs or gutters for the section of Fairview Avenue E. along Fairview Olmsted Park. Prompted by the Plan recommendations, community requests and City officials, the Parks and Transportation departments are looking at a crossing with a more rustic approach, in keeping with the Park's purpose and design and with Plan recommendations.

Neighborhood Open Space Stewardship

The Open Space and North Gateway planning teams organized numerous work parties to spruce up the neighborhood's green spaces.