

**Eastlake  
Community  
Council**

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# **EASTLAKE NEWS**

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1987-88  
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## **SEWARD SCHOOL CLOSURE? I-5/SR-520 INTERCHANGE?**

### **Serious Issues to Dominate ECC General Meeting on April 26**

This was supposed to be the April Fool's edition of the *Eastlake News*. The ECC has often talked about doing a light-hearted issue of the newsletter and now seemed to be a good time. Much of the community council's work during the past year -- land use appeals and lobbying for preservation of the Steam Plant, neighborhood planning and interim controls on multi-family housing -- has helped gain a greater degree of stability for our neighborhood. Eastlake appeared to be spared issues of major consequence for the first time in many months; at last we could breathe a little. So, we decided that the time was right for us to sit back, relax and poke some fun at the City and ourselves. After all, we're always saying that the ECC never seems to have enough fun.

But the focus of this newsletter is not a laughing matter. It is not an April Fool's joke. A few weeks ago, the Seattle School District superintendent recommended that Seward School be closed and sold. At about the same time, Mayor Royer launched an initiative to study the old issue of the I-5/SR-520 interchange. Past studies of the interchange proposed solutions that, if implemented, would have resulted in major destruction of the Eastlake neighborhood and would have hastened the demise of the school: Seward posed the major obstacle to implementation.

Details on the Seward School closure are inside. Because of its significance, all other issues have been temporarily put on hold. We ask you to read about the closure in this newsletter and elsewhere, and discuss it with your neighbors. Then, attend two important meetings. Our monthly General Meeting will be held on April 26 from 7 to 9 pm at the Seward School library, and will be devoted to the school closure and its relevance to the Mayor's SR-520 study. Your opinions can also be voiced at a public hearing on the closure of Seward at the school's library on May 2 at 7 pm. The strength of this voice will determine Seward's, and Eastlake's, future. **GET INVOLVED AND BE PART OF THE EASTLAKE COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE TO THE CLOSURE OF SEWARD SCHOOL.**



## Seward and the I-5/520 Interchange

Making the school closure list is like a form of Russian roulette. Four neighborhood schools are loaded into the gun. For several months the barrel spins while the district evaluates the viability of each school. The neighborhoods, refusing to save their own schools at the expense of another, frantically work together to build support for all the schools and argue that none should be closed. Then the shot is fired.

This time the bullet has Seward's name. The City is sympathetic; the other neighborhoods breathe a secret sigh of relief, but they know the barrel will soon spin again.

Seward School is a designated historic landmark and one of the original "model" Seattle schools. It presents a unique and impressive link to Seattle's, and Eastlake's, past. It is also the only public facility in Eastlake. If Seward is closed, all of us living in the neighborhood (not just those with children) will suffer the direct effects of lost educational opportunities and community identity.

Closure of Seward could have other impacts, more indirect but just as costly. At about the same time that Seward was selected to be closed, Mayor Royer launched an initiative to study the SR-520 corridor (and the I-5/SR-520 interchange) in an effort to get more people across Lake Washington. More people, more lanes. Previous studies have always cited Seward as a major obstacle to the I-5/SR-520 interchange. That obstacle may now be conveniently removed. Coincidence? Maybe so. But we doubt that the State Department of Transportation will shed any tears. Without Seward School, it may well be that Eastlake will be valued more for the number of commuter lanes that can be added to the freeway system than for its attributes as a neighborhood.

The recommendation to close Seward was supposedly based on criteria developed by the School District. The decision on Seward's closure will certainly be political. If Seward remains open, it will not be because a couple of people with persuasive arguments are able to save it. It can only happen with strong support from all of us -- homeowners, renters, parents, senior citizens, students. We all have a stake in the quality and character of our neighborhood and Seward School.

*Carol Eychaner, Community Council President*

## Why Kendrick Says Seward Must Go

Superintendent William Kendrick outlined the reasons for his recommendation to close Seward School in his "Plan to Strengthen Education in the Seattle Public Schools" (3/23/88). However, the criteria used for measuring the attributes and disadvantages of the schools considered for closure are not fairly or equally applied. In fact, it is impossible to determine how the analysis and subsequent recommendations were made; the report establishes no priority rating for the various criteria.

A close look at the Kendrick plan reveals that the identification and analysis of Seward's disadvantages are not consistent with those for other schools in the Large Planning Unit 8 (LPU8) area. (LPU8 is the planning area containing Seward, Montlake, McGilvra and Stevens elementary schools, all of which were studied for closure.) For instance:

**Resident population.** Seward's resident population is admittedly low, and most of the kids are bused in. The plan identifies the resident student population of 86 as a disadvantage. Compare this with the Montlake School area, which has only 124 students, about half the total Montlake enrollment. Yet the report describes Montlake's lack of resident school-age population as an advantage in the closure issue, since it "reflects the program's draw from outside its attendance area."

**Building costs.** Seward is identified as having by far the highest future facilities needs in the LPU8 area. Yet the District has already invested \$250,000 to improve the school; and the report doesn't identify reasons for the future expenses for Seward, though it does identify expenditures for other schools. Seward also has the lowest operational cost per square foot and the second lowest maintenance cost of the 4 LPU8 schools; but neither of these statistics are mentioned as factors in Seward's favor. In contrast, McGilvra is cited for its advantage in having the lowest maintenance cost.

**Multiple buildings.** Seward is said to have problems with student supervision because the school is divided into 3 buildings. Montlake and Stevens, both small schools, use portables to accommodate enrollments much smaller than Seward's. Yet the plan doesn't mention the difficult supervision of these portables. In fact, the report claims that increasing the portables at Stevens and McGilvra could increase their (below District minimum) capacity; this even



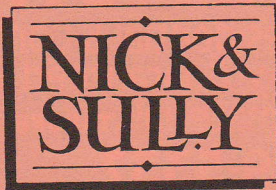
though portables are earlier identified in the plan as violating "the spirit of the Board's adopted goals for the use of school buildings."

Other inconsistencies in the plan exaggerate or distort Seward's supposed shortcomings. In reality, its "disadvantages" are no greater in number or magnitude than the other LPU8 schools. Like these schools, Seward should remain open.



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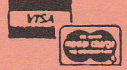
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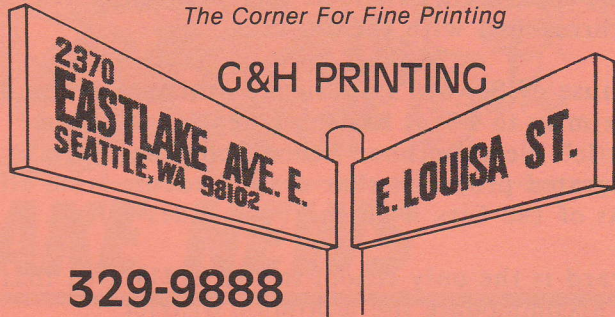
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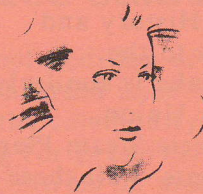


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## Why We Need Seward School

Seward School contributes to the educational, historical and communal well-being of the City.

Seward offers four educational programs for grades kindergarten through five: one of these, Project Kindergarten -- an individually paced basic skills program complemented with a PTSA-sponsored Extended Day program -- may be threatened with the closure.

Because of Seward's unique central location and proximity to I-5, it has the potential to become Seattle's Neighborhood School, housing special integrated programs that draw students from all parts of the City with short bus rides for all.

Seward is the only school in the LPU8 area that can accommodate the minimum district enrollment without portables, and which currently has more than the minimum enrollment. Seward is a full-facility school with an ample play area.

The Arboretum and Museum of History and Industry are important resources to the Montlake School program. Eastlake is similarly rich with urban resources. Lake Union, seaplanes, NOAA ships, the historic Steam Plant, boat building, Alaska fishing boats -- all these are part of the Seward classroom that cannot be moved to a portable.

Seward is one of the original model schools founded by James Stephens. The three buildings, dated 1893, 1905 and 1917, are designated historic landmarks. The buildings have been recently repainted and altered to reduce freeway noise in the classrooms. Last year, the ECC designated Seward to receive City Light funds totalling \$11,000 for asbestos removal; this work was performed over the summer. The community and the District have made these investments because of Seward's historical and community value to the Eastlake area, the City and the students. Only minimal improvements are required to upgrade Seward's structural and seismic rating. Nothing is gained by removing children from buildings of integrity and placing them in portable chicken coops -- except the dollars made from the sale.

Seward School is Eastlake's only public facility. We have no community center, no church meeting hall. Without Seward, we are left with the public restrooms at Rogers Field.

Like the Steam Plant and the houseboats,

Seward School is an essential part of our neighborhood identity. It also attracts parents who value a school located in an area with older, affordable homes, proximity to jobs and adult education, and a quality in-city environment. Recent years have brought an increase of such families to Eastlake. If Seward is closed, will Eastlake's diversity be lessened and our character forever changed?

## BIBELIOTS & BOOKS

*Rare and Used  
Illustrated Books  
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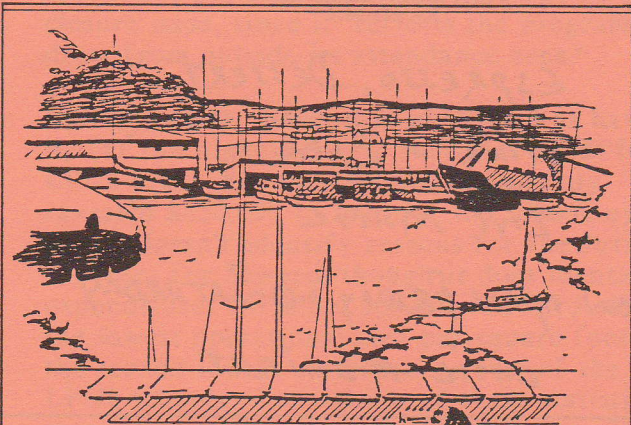
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