



FLOATING HOMES ASSOCIATION

206 325 1132

2329 Fairview Avenue East Seattle WA 98102 USA

seattlefloatinghomes.org

October 2009

Dear Seattle City Council Candidate,

The Floating Homes Association represents about 500 houseboats around Lake Union and Portage Bay. We'd like to draw your attention to a process currently underway that stands to deeply affect us.

As a member of the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), the Floating Homes Association has had the opportunity to engage with the city in a discussion of its intentions regarding the regulation of floating homes. While we believe some of our issues have been recognized by DPD, we remain concerned that new burdensome requirements may be proposed that are out of proportion to the benefit they might have to migrating salmon or the environment in general.

Circumstance and zoning have squeezed us into limited areas of Lake Union and Portage Bay. These areas were the last refuges for houseboats losing their moorage elsewhere in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, the moorages that remain fit snugly together like a jigsaw puzzle to make room for as many of those refugees as they can. Within living memory, our Floating Homes Community has undergone enormous changes, including losing at least three-quarters of its population.

Since its passage in the mid 1970s, Seattle's SMP has provided a framework on which the intricate relationships among the owners of floating homes and moorages have depended. We have come to rely not only on how the SMP acknowledges and shapes the reality of our tight situation, but on the stability it has helped provide following the turbulent times of the past.

Living on the water makes us sensitive to the health of the lake. For example, the Floating Homes Community led the effort to end dumping raw sewage into the water along our shorelines and regularly partners with and supports the Puget Soundkeeper Alliance. We remain vocal advocates of a clean environment, which we recognize as a baseline for a thriving ecology.

Through our involvement in the CAC, we learned that DPD considers our floats and docks to be impediments to migrating salmon, in spite of evidence that houseboat moorages have little impact. DPD invokes this rationale when it further restricts building standards and regulations that already impose severe restraints on our community. While some argue that further restrictions are required by the Growth Management Act, we assert that DPD has the freedom to use its discretion in this situation and that the changes, if any, need not be detrimental to the Floating Homes Community.

While we embrace the goal of doing our share to elevate the quality of our lake's environment, we feel compelled to point out how much change we've already endured in the recent past, the degree to which we've depended on the stability of the current SMP, and how little we can actually influence the overall environmental situation.

Consequently, we are wary of some of DPD's proposals. They threaten yet more costs and adjustments for what seem to be theoretical benefits.

The attached summary provides more information on our concerns.

Best Regards,

The Floating Homes Association
By, William A Keasler
President