

Public Comment to the Parks and Community Services Board, Feb. 12, 2008

My name is Ruth Chaus, of 13208 68th PI NE in Kirkland. I grew up in Bellevue, interned at the Bellevue Botanical Garden in 2000, and after that began to volunteer on the NPA Border. I have spent the last 4 years serving on the Border Committee (prior to that serving 3 years on the NPA Board). I spoke on my behalf at this time, not for either the NPA or the Border Committee.

To recap the points I made at the Parks Board Meeting:

1. Visitor Center size. The Northwest Perennial Alliance has around 1400 members. For General Meetings, the Graham Visitor Center at the Arboretum is too small for us. The NHS Hall at the Center for Urban Horticulture is all right, but we get standing room only meetings there with our most popular speakers. It would benefit us to have a slightly larger space and to be able to have meetings at the Botanical Garden, so close to our border. This is contingent, I understand, on such a space fitting harmoniously in the neighborhood.
2. We currently have growing space for plants within the existing BBG maintenance facility. The Border Committee hopes for space about 10% larger at the new maintenance facility with a cold frame and/or lathe house and a minimum 8'x12' greenhouse. This would allow us to offer more and different plants for sale to support the Perennial Border.
3. I asked that the Master Plan be approved with the condition that any changes in the Perennial Border be postponed until consensus can be reached between 2 conflicting factions of the NPA: the NPA Board and the NPA Border Committee. The current proposed changes were negotiated by the NPA Board's Planning Committee behind the back of the Border Committee, and we have problems with that process and some of the decisions made, for instance with reducing the size of the Border. Because the Border Committee and its volunteers do the actual work on the Border the continuity of work on the Border is at risk. Please allow us to get our house in order before any final decisions are made about the Border.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
Ruth Chaus

Response to BBG Master Plan Update

January 17th Public Meeting

January 25th Meeting with Garden Manager

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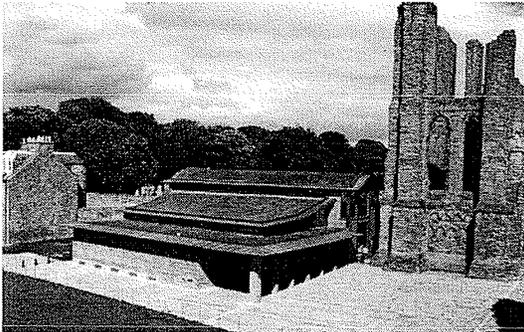
Visitor Center/Garden Offices

I support the selection of Option A of the 3 choices for the Master Plan. Meeting rooms and classrooms are sited where they mostly displace soggy lawn and the current garden office. The enlarged facilities increase opportunities for outreach, both to develop the next generation of gardeners that will care for the Botanical Garden, and to encourage general public support of the garden. Although the Wilburton Neighborhood is justifiably concerned about encroaching tall buildings, there is an opportunity here for the City of Bellevue to define and demonstrate excellent transition space that enhances both the commercial and residential neighborhoods.

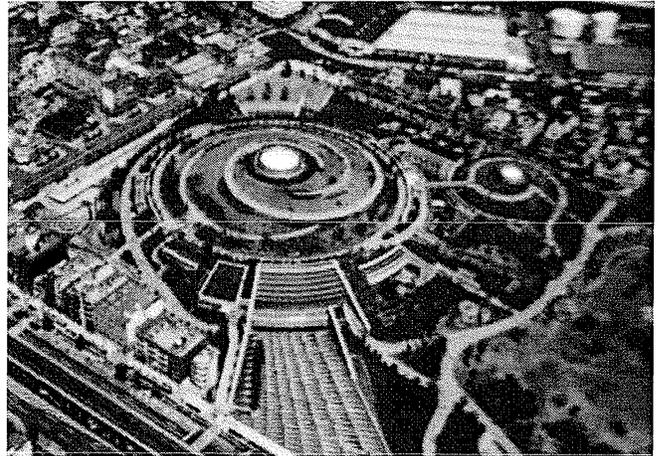
Price tags aside, I think the City of Bellevue should be considering a green roofed building, which would have the least environmental impact on storm water, and would provide an area for planting. The hill where the Sharp cabin is now sited could even be extended to help cover the roof, or be connected by walkways or bridges to the roof. A lower level might accommodate parking.



Green roof on Grove Park Inn, Asheville, North Carolina



Arbroath Abbey Visitor Centre, Scotland



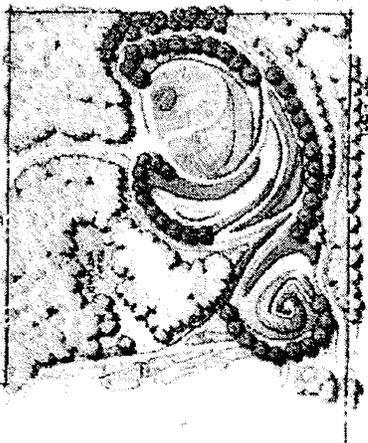
Osaka Municipal Central Gymnasium

It may be possible to have an additional viewing Mound on the top of the new facility. Green roofs are a promising environmental strategy, and a form of gardening that is likely to be increasingly significant as yards shrink and houses are built closer together. Attached is the result of a web search for grants for green roofs that suggests many avenues of funding that may be available to offset increased building costs. Reductions in roof maintenance and heating costs might also make it a viable solution over the long term.

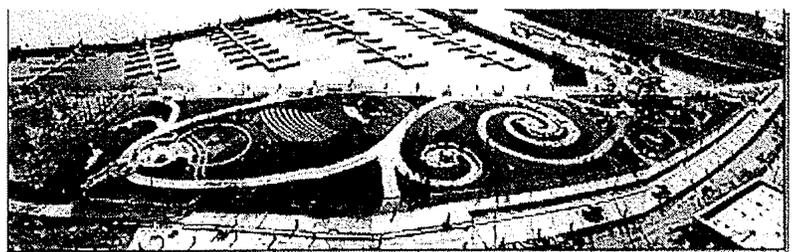
Regardless, the City of Bellevue needs to preserve the peaceful and environmentally sensitive nature of this neighborhood. Please don't wall in the Botanical Garden with development.

Sun Terrace/Wetland Garden

The proposed Sun Terrace is attractive, responsive to the movement of the spiral in the mound, and reminiscent of the Music Garden in Toronto. Perhaps a music component could be added. One caveat though: there are so many perimeter trees to the south, west and east in this initial drawing, that any view of the wetland is blocked. Wasn't the purpose of the mound to have a view of the wetland below?



Proposed Sun Terrace



Toronto Music Garden

It seems a pity to tear down so much of the West Perennial Border to create a view of the new Wetland Garden, and then put up trees to block the view from the Mound. Is there a wetland setback reason for this? If not, I would rather the view of the Wetland Garden be oriented to the Mound.

Perennial Border

I am among the NPA members who are troubled by the proposed rush to changes in the Perennial Border. Those others in NPA who insist that Border maintenance must cost less, who think a smaller Border is the only solution to the problem, seem very willing to spend money on design and installation instead, with no guarantee that new maintenance volunteers will be sufficient to supplant the old volunteers they are deliberately displacing. Is the City of Bellevue prepared to make up the difference?

I am concerned about losing valuable plants. An objective evaluation needs to be made of the collection before plants are discarded. For instance, Reath's Nursery currently lists a 5-6 year old *Paeonia suffruticosa* var. *Rockii* (Joseph Rock Tree Peony) at \$400.00. Ours is over twice that age. This would likely be removed to make room for the proposed wheelchair-accessible viewing area in the center of the Border adjoining the lawn.

I am concerned that the pathways that allow people to get closer to plants will disrupt beautiful and iconic views of the garden. Long lines of bodies will cut them in two. It will be like fighting through the crowds to get a view of the Show Gardens at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. Locations of any paths need to take the plants, bed designs and views into consideration.

While better physical and visual integration with the Short's house (which will cease to be a Visitor Center) sounds good in theory, the same standard is not being applied to the Yao Garden or the Native garden, neither of which have the world-wide reputation of this Border. The sweep and scale and exuberance of this Border are part of what makes it notable.

NPA Border Volunteers have long wished for a greenhouse to increase our capacity to propagate plants for sale in support of the Border. It was surprising to hear at the January 17th Public Meeting that there might not be enough light at the proposed Maintenance Facility on the Koh property. I recently visited the site. The light should be sufficient, especially since we would have the possibility of electricity providing supplemental lighting when needed. The clearing at the Koh property is around 6 times the size of the current maintenance facility, and I suspect there are several locations possible for an 8' x 12' greenhouse, cold frame, and 10% larger growing area. Alternatively, if a new classroom were built, it might be possible to add a classroom sized greenhouse on top of it, around 16' x 20'. This would have even more access to light.

Thank you so much for the careful consideration and long hours you are putting into this project. I appreciate this opportunity to comment, and hope that my observations are helpful.