



January 22, 2014

Planning Commission  
City of Kirkland  
123 Fifth Avenue  
Kirkland, Washington 98033

Re: Holmes Point Overlay Zone

Dear Planning Commissioners:

The board of directors of the Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance writes to express its support – with one important exception – for the revisions that the City Planning Department proposes be made to the Holmes Point Overlay (“HPO”) ordinance. As you know, the Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance (“FHNA”) was originally formed in the 1990s as the Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance (DCNA), and prior to Finn Hill’s annexation by Kirkland, DCNA worked with King County to formulate the original HPO in order to protect the western portion of Finn Hill from erosion due to development and to preserve the mature tree canopy of the Holmes Point area. The FHNA is therefore extremely interested in ensuring that the HPO continues to be an important tool for regulating land use on properties west of Juanita Drive.

We are pleased that the proposed revisions continue requirements that significant trees on residential lots be protected, that at least 25% of residential parcels be reserved for Protected Natural Areas and that these areas be maintained with native vegetation in perpetuity. In particular, we also endorse proposed language in Section 3.c of the ordinance clarifying that Protected Natural Areas should consist “to the maximum extent possible” of existing viable trees and native vegetation. Protection of established native trees and shrubs in our neighborhood is vital to limiting landslides on Finn Hill’s slopes and to ensuring that the unique character of Holmes Point is preserved.

After posting the proposed HPO revisions on the FHNA website this weekend, however, we received comments from several Finn Hill residents who have raised concerns about language in Sections 1.c and 4.b.2 that address situations in which it is not “feasible” to designate a Protected Natural Area to encompass existing native vegetation on a parcel. These residents have questioned whether the use of the word “feasible” weakens the general requirement that a Protected Natural Area encompass viable trees and native vegetation to the “maximum extent possible.”

There should be no misunderstanding that the City must work with property owners and developers to take all necessary steps to protect established native trees and shrubs. In order to remove any doubts about the priority that should be given to preserving existing vegetation, it would be appropriate to replace “feasible” with “possible” in both Sections 3.c and 4.b.2 of the proposed amendment. (See

accompanying draft, showing the recommended revision.) Making this change would ensure that the language pertaining to the location of a Protected Natural Area is consistent throughout the ordinance.

We greatly appreciate the opportunities that the Planning Department has given FHNA members to review the draft ordinance and to submit comments. We believe that quality of the proposal that you are now considering has been enhanced by this collaboration between neighbors and the City staff. We hope you will endorse the proposed amendments with the additional revisions to Sections 1.c and 4.b.2 described above and present them to the City Council with a recommendation for final approval.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE FINN HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE



Scott Morris, President

cc: Joan Lieberman-Brill  
Jeremy Mc Mahan