



June 2, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Maple Leaf Community Council Executive Board, an elected body representing over 3,400 homes and businesses in north Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood, announces today a successful outcome for their King County Superior Court case filed as part of an ongoing effort to positively affect development at the site of historic Waldo Hospital.

On May 29, King County Superior Court Judge Timothy A. Bradshaw remanded the decision of the Seattle Hearing Examiner, directing the Hearing Examiner to "fully consider the additional condition" of a tent-like enclosure to protect the Maple Leaf Reservoir and surrounding community from lead-bearing dust during any demolition of Waldo Hospital. The lack of any meaningful mitigation for the spread of toxic lead dust during demolition was the primary focus of Maple Leaf's appeal to King County Superior Court and the appeal to the Hearing Examiner.

"We are happy the judge agreed with evidence presented by our experts that lead dust resulting from demolition was a significant health risk to the community requiring certain mitigation," stated Maple Leaf Community Council President Marc Phillips. "Our efforts to save the trees on the site were the most visible part of what the community was working on, but winning this point was very important to families in our community who drink water from the reservoir, have their kids play at the adjacent ball fields, or have their kids picked up at one of three school bus stops in the immediate area."

Among the several reports submitted by the developer that contained false or incomplete information, an initial toxins survey claimed there was "no lead detected" in the 1920s-era Waldo Hospital. Only after repeated urging by the Maple Leaf community did the city require sufficient testing, revealing the presence of lead in the walls and in surrounding soil. It is important to note that the lead in the walls of the building only becomes dangerous during demolition. If the building is left intact, lead-based paint on the walls is easily sealed and poses no danger to the community or users of the building.

"We want to express our thanks to the hundreds of people from our community and across Seattle who supported our efforts to positively affect development at this site," stated David Miller, who headed up the Maple Leaf Community Council's effort on Waldo Hospital. "This was never about stopping development, it was about making sure the development was environmentally sound. Having the judge recognize the danger of lead contamination from demolition is critical since there are no federal, state, county, or city rules protecting communities from the spread of lead dust."

“The EPA has said there is no safe level of lead for children,” stated industrial hygienist and toxic expert Janice Camp, who lives in Maple Leaf and provided expert testimony during the hearings. “Even the City admitted under oath they don’t do a good job on this issue, and this court decision is a step towards fixing the problem,” added Ms. Camp.

The Maple Leaf Community Council has learned the Waldo Hospital property is again for sale. “As we did back in 2006 when we learned through a news article the property was for sale,” stated Mr. Miller, “we immediately reached out to the property owners. This time, we were able to provide names and contact information of qualified, interested buyers to the owners and their real estate agent. We have already been contacted by multiple bidders who are interested in preserving the building and the grove of trees.”

“It is not well known that we expended considerable effort trying to work with the original bidders suggesting land swaps and other alternatives to reduce the environmental impact of the proposal,” stated Mr. Miller. “Under our own initiative, we even secured a sizable King County Conservation Futures Grant to help preserve the grove. We look forward to working with all parties to return Waldo Hospital to a working, vibrant part of our business community.”

Background

In addition to this legal victory, the publicity about urban forest issues created by the effort to save Waldo Woods has resulted in new Council resolutions, ordinances, and proposals to improve Seattle’s ability to save our urban forest canopy.

Waldo Hospital is located in the Maple Leaf neighborhood of North Seattle, near the intersection of 15th NE and 85th NE. Built in 1924, it was one of the first osteopathic hospitals in the state. It was designed specifically as a teaching institution and located just outside Seattle’s city limits because teaching osteopathy was not allowed in Seattle at the time it was built. Hundreds of osteopaths were trained at Waldo Hospital, and it was the first hospital in the area to allow naturopaths from the fledgling Bastyr School to complete the residency requirements to get their medical degrees.

The hospital was named for its founder, Dr. William “Bill” Waldo, who was very active in osteopathy on the local, state, and national level. He was a three-time President of the Washington Osteopathic Medical Association, president of the King County Osteopaths, and the President of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) 1921-22. Elected to the AOA Board of Trustees in 1913, he spent the next ten years intimately involved in significant decisions that helped shape the path of osteopathy on a national level. He helped author medical school standards, formulate model legislation for state licensure of osteopaths based on Washington State law, and personally lectured about osteopathy to tens of thousands of Americans in the 1920s and 1930s.

Dr. Waldo was also active locally. His hospital offered free surgical care to patients who couldn’t afford it. During the Great Depression, his affordable flat-rate prices for delivering babies made Waldo Hospital a first choice for Seattle mothers. Dr. Waldo personally delivered over 2,400 babies. He provided free medical care to student athletes of three local high schools, was the team physician for the University of Washington Husky football team, and was the team physician for the Seattle Indians Baseball Club.

Washington Historic Trust placed Waldo Hospital on its Most Endangered Historic Properties list in May of 2007.

In addition to the historic building, the Waldo Hospital site contains a rare urban forest habitat of over 80 trees. The intact grove on the eastern 1/3 of the site has become known as Waldo Woods. It was identified in a King County process to be an environmental area/habitat worth conservation.

More information can be found on the Maple Leaf Community Council web site at <http://www.MapleLeafCommunity.org>

For more information:

David Miller, Chair, Waldo Working Group
David.Miller@MapleLeafCommunity.org or 206-528-8110

Marc Phillips, President, Maple Leaf Community Council
Marc.Phillips@MapleLeafCommunity.org

Janice Camp, Secretary, Maple Leaf Community Council
Janice.Camp@MapleLeafCommunity.org