

March 19, 2012

Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Ave., Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Rehabilitation of Harborview Hall

Dear King County Councilmembers,

Last September, King County issued a Request for Qualifications/Concepts for the Adaptive Re-use of Harborview Hall, an architecturally and historically significant building on the Harborview Medical Center Campus. Despite a very narrow timeframe, there was keen interest in the project and King County ultimately received four viable proposals. Following the initial RFQ, the county, with cooperation from the Harborview Board of Trustees, agreed to issue a follow-up and more comprehensive Request for Proposals. This allowed project proponents to engage in the necessary due diligence and focus on the myriad details involved with a rehabilitation and development project on the scale of Harborview Hall. The time was well spent, as the county once again received viable proposals which included the details and framework necessary to demonstrate the feasibility of redeveloping Harborview.

I write today to encourage the King County Council to support redevelopment of Harborview Hall. Harborview Hall represents a significant economic opportunity and is the correct thing to do from the historic preservation and sustainability standpoints. A few compelling reasons to rehabilitate Harborview Hall:

- The adaptive re-use of Harborview Hall is economically viable and will create jobs.
- Harborview Hall will require improvements such as seismic upgrades, but it is a structurally sound building providing 95,000 square feet of usable office space.
- Rehabilitation is technically feasible, as demonstrated by the development teams in response to the RFP.
- Rehabilitation can be accomplished without expending any new taxpayer dollars.
- Rehabilitation creates local jobs that are more labor intensive than new construction – this means more dollars going into the pockets of workers and less going toward the purchase of new materials.

- Harborview Hall has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places – this will allow the developers to utilize the federal tax credit program for rehabilitation of the building.
- A study released in January determined that “based on climate-change considerations alone, almost every usable building in every region of the U.S. should remain standing —even if those buildings are not retrofitted to improve energy performance.”

In King County, we are fortunate to have elected officials who are proactive in considering sustainable options for our future, including the adoption of a Green Policy and, in 2008, adoption of an ordinance outlining an action plan for stewardship of county-owned historic properties. Harborview Hall is a prime opportunity for the county to wed these policy initiatives. Rehabilitating an existing building is the greenest construction practice there is and in this case would also result in the retention of a historically significant building. Moreover, when considering the projected need of thousands (perhaps hundreds of thousands) of additional square feet in the form of office and other space on the Harborview Campus over the next decade, redevelopment of a viable building makes even more sense.

Presently, the Major Institution Master Plan (MIMP) adopted for the Harborview Medical Center campus calls for Harborview Hall to be demolished and a plaza providing much needed open space to be developed where the building currently stands. This plan was adopted a decade ago and since that time, the MIMP has been amended and revised for other purposes along the way. This is typical of many MIMP's, which are put in place as planning tools to guide future development and not as a rigid course of action offering no flexibility for implementation. Fortunately, redevelopment of Harborview Hall and creation of open space is not an either/or proposition: the campus contains ample area to both preserve Harborview Hall and create an open space experience that meets the needs of the Harborview community and its constituents.

Harborview Hall has been in use as a medical-related facility for 80 years. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation strongly encourages the King County Council to support the rehabilitation of Harborview Hall for ongoing medical-related uses.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Meisner
Executive Director

Cc: Jennifer Uy, Liaison, Harborview Board of Trustees
Steve Sheppard, City Liaison to Harborview Medical Center Citizen's Advisory Committee