

some historical context for the

mt. baker lowe's site

NEIGHBORHOOD RESILIENCE SERIES

Context for Community Control

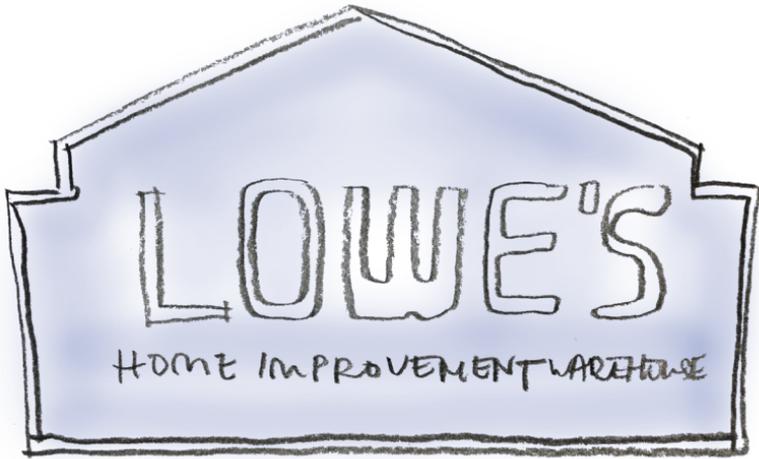
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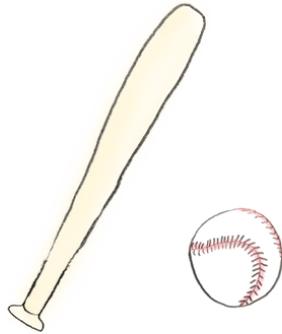
First edition.



Introduction



With the recent upzoning of the Lowe's Home Improvement site in Mt. Baker, a number of changes are in sight. The area is slated for development, but no firm plans are in place for what the site will become. In considering that, some important questions arise: what does a neighborhood really need to be livable? And who determines that?



Could there be a huge 12-story tower? A vertical farm? A hovercraft docking site?

We don't know what will happen to the site, but here we'll present some of its history to provide context as you begin to imagine its future.



The Lowe's Site



The outlined lots are approximately 13 acres of land in total.

Coast Salish History

Long before Lowe's ever existed, indigenous communities arrived in the Pacific Northwest 11,000 to 12,000 years ago. Their cultures continue today, despite near-erasure by Euro-American settlement in the mid-1800s.¹

The Coast Salish people living around Lake Washington were known as "Xacua'bs" in Lushootseed (hah-chu-AHBSH)², which can translate to Large Lake People. They established a trail through Rainier Valley, between Elliott Bay and Lake Washington, roughly along the site of today's Rainier Ave S.³

Village sites were located along Lake Washington's shore, and typically had cedar longhouses that housed multiple families.

The image to the right is a Quamichan village near the outlet of the Cowichan River.

1 <http://www.historylink.org/File/1506>

2 http://coastsalishmap.org/Village_Descriptions_Duwamish-Seattle.htm

3 <http://www.historylink.org/File/3092>

<https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/HistoricPreservation/HistoricResourcesSurvey/context-mount-baker.pdf>



Non-native Settlement

Non-native settlers arrived in the 1850s, but settler populations did not grow until the Rainier Valley's timber stands were logged and milled at local sawmills.

As Seattle boomed in the 1880s, developers turned their attention to building new communities in Rainier Valley. Transportation was one of the first steps in drawing in new settlement. The Rainier Avenue Electric Railway, built along the present-day route of Rainier Avenue S, opened the valley to suburban and eventually urban development.

To the right is a 1915 image of Dugdale Baseball Park, photographed looking South on Rainier Ave. The baseball park sits where Lowe's is today, and burned down in 1932. Wood plan paving on the street is from Rainier Valley's forests.¹

¹ <http://www.historylink.org/File/3092>



FRANK J. HARRIS
GENERAL MGR.
SEATTLE, WASH.

100 ft. North Lander St. looking South

July 6 - 1915

Garlic Gulch

During the early 1900s, the area was home to Seattle's largest Italian enclave, many of whom had arrived in Seattle work as laborers and farmers. North Rainier Valley had inexpensive housing, land for small farms, and was located close to downtown. Many of the remaining structures of Italian businesses and settlements were demolished during the construction of I-90 in the 1970s and 1980s.¹

To the right is a picture of one of the Vacca sons on the Vacca family farm, looking into the baseball stadium. The hill was known as Cheapskate Hill, where people would gather to watch baseball games for free.²

1 Seattle Historical Sites, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. <https://web6.seattle.gov/DPD/HistoricalSite/QueryResult.aspx?ID=509297662>

2 <http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org/stories/exhibits/baseball-in-the-rainier-valley>



Restrictive Covenants in Mt. Baker

Though the Rainier Valley was home to many immigrants and communities of color, Mt. Baker was developed as a highly-planned, wealthy community. Restrictive covenants set the cost of houses at \$2000 (expensive at the time), prevented the sale of property to non-whites, and required that houses be single-family residences set back at least 25 feet from the street.¹

The Mount Baker Club formed the “Restrictions Committee,” by 1915, which permitted only single family housing and prevented non-whites from purchasing property through a variety of measures. The Community Club was against using any lots for “clubs, schools, boarding or lodging houses, churches, charitable or religious societies or orders or for any other purpose than strictly detached family residences.”²

1 <http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org/stories/articles/now-you-see-it-now-you-dont-franklin-high-school-and-the-mount-baker-neighborhood>

2 Mt. Baker Context Statement.

<https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/HistoricPreservation/HistoricResourcesSurvey/context-mount-baker.pdf>



Sick's Stadium after its demolition in 1979.



Sick's Stadium with Franklin High School in the background.

Restrictive Covenants

Seattle adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1923, which formalized pre-existing informal racialized red-lining. A 1928 U.S. court decision legitimized Caucasian-only property ownership.¹

The neighborhood's red-lining was challenged in court by Susie Stone in 1909, but the neighborhood was almost entirely white until the 1960s,² when local activism challenged the existing practices and the Mt. Baker Community Club modified its restrictive policies.

1 Mt. Baker Context Statement.

2 <http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org/stories/articles/now-you-see-it-now-you-dont-franklin-high-school-and-the-mount-baker-neighborhood>



Sick's Stadium

After Dugdale Baseball Park burned down, Sick's Stadium was built in 1938 and remained there until 1979. The Kingdome, built in 1977, supplanted the stadium and debate about what to do with the site ensued.

After the stadium's demolition, a CX Corporation electronics plant was developed on the site. It was followed by Eagle Hardware, which opened there in 1992, before Lowe's purchased the business in 1998.

An aerial view of the stadium and its surroundings in 1953.¹

¹ <http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org/stories/exhibits/baseball-in-the-rainier-valley>



Lowe's Home Improvement

Lowe's Home Improvement has a long-term lease in its existing site, and is the only major hardware store in Southeast Seattle. However, big box stores and parking lots are generally outside of the desires of transit-oriented development. So change is only a matter of time.

What do you see this site becoming?



14

CAPITOL HILL

278

CAPITOL HILL

14

MT. BAKER

HIGH
TRADES

SHOE

GET CUT E
EVERYTH
FOR MEN WOMEN
HOUSEHOLD NEEDS
CIGARETTES



ESTON
TO WEAR RIDERS
CHILDREN
TOILETRIES
LATEST PRICES

24
Motorola Radio
RADIO

SUN HING
LAUNDRY

LAUNDRY

SUN HING
LAUNDRY

RADIO

2208

WEB RESOURCES

Coast Salish Villages of Puget Sound
CoastSalishMap.org

HistoryLink.org

Rainier Valley Historical Society
<http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org/>

Seattle Dept. of Neighborhoods Historic Resources Survey
<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/historic-preservation/historic-resources-survey>

