

Lisa Clausen

From: Public Council Inbox
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2010 3:52 PM
To: 'David Engdahl'
Subject: RE: Shoreline Management

Thank you for your message to the Burien City Council, received on July 26, 2010. It will be included in the Correspondence for the Record for an upcoming Council meeting.

Lisa Clausen

Burien City Manager's Office

From: David Engdahl [mailto:engdahld@seattleu.edu]
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2010 2:18 PM
To: Public Council Inbox
Subject: Shoreline Management

July 16, 2010

Dear City Council Members,

My husband and I attended the June 21st public forum for the Shoreline Master Program. During that forum Mayor Joan McGilton made comments about the shoreline homes in Burien, stating they "are certainly worth more than a million; we're looking at probably one to four million". She went on to opine "that these homes worth less than that don't fulfill the standards of our upscale Gold Coast folks, if those aren't tear down houses."

A Gold Coast in Burien? Burien is not Mercer Island or Medina or Hunt's Point or Clyde Hill. Only a very small handful of Burien's shoreline homes are in that league. Most Burien waterfront homes are on small lots, 60' wide or narrower, and are built 10' or less from their neighbors. About half of them either have no street access except by long, steep stairway or by tram, or else abut perilously on a busy roadway. Most, however, have charm or some other points of appeal aside from their scenic location; and virtually all of them are quite ordinary people's homes. Most are proudly maintained – many by residents of long duration, and others by folk whose hard labors and hopes of finding and (sometimes barely) affording such a location have rather more recently been rewarded.

There are some costly homes here; but in almost all instances much more than half of the value is in the location. As we all know, prices and tax appraisal values have drawn closer together over the last few years. Declines in appraised values since 2008 as great as 34% to 45% are not uncommon among these shorefront properties. According to county records, the average appraisal on a waterfront home in Burien for tax assessment purposes in 2010 (for 2011 taxes) is \$731,000, for lot and improvements combined. This sum would have to be exceeded by 37% to reach the \$1,000,000 mark.

(LFR: 08/02/10)

Within the four reaches of Burien's shoreline, current assessed values (land and improvements combined) range from a low of \$45,000 to a high of \$3,573,000. More precisely:

Reach 1	high: \$3,573,000 low: \$218,000 average: \$865,000
Reach 2	high: \$1,250,000 low: \$636,000 average: \$771,000
Reach 3	high: \$1,622,000 low: \$45,000 average: \$701,000
Reach 4	high: \$1,640,000 low: \$360,000 average: \$674,000

These are not swanky new homes; 75% of the homes on Burien's waterfront were built before 1970, and more than a third of them before 1930. But these are not teardowns either: fully one half of the homes currently tax-appraised at or above \$1M were built before 1970 – several of them before 1930. Burien's waterfront is home to a highly diverse array of persons of varying age, wealth, and taste, including some whose only significant asset is this location that they love, others enjoying after long effort the special place they have saved and stretched – and risked – to attain, others succeeding by good fortune to places their parents or grandparents had built up before them, and very, very few by any stretch deserving of the jealous disdain cast by the epithet “upscale Gold Coast folks.”

The most expensive piece of property in Reach 1 (and on the entire Burien shoreline) is exceptionally costly because it is a compound that was originally six separate lots; together, it includes three houses and a cabana and occupies several hundred feet of waterfront. My husband and I own the “cheap seat” in Reach 1, and our sweet, well-kept little cabin is, in fact, about to become a tear down. We are on the verge of building a new home within 40 feet of the shoreline with a stable (and duly approved) steep slope behind. Lately we ask ourselves WHY we are planning to construct a new home, increasing our disproportionate contribution to Burien's tax coffers and in return acquiring the dubious distinction of being the newest nonconforming structure in town.

My 80-something parents have lived on Burien's waterfront for 26 years. Their home is a lovely, updated, well maintained 1960's era home. It was appraised at just over \$1,600,000 in 2007, but their 2010 assessment is \$749,000, and in today's market they would be fortunate to get \$1,000,000 in a sale. However, they have no intention of moving : their house is not a tear down, it is their home. It is also their largest asset. It would be reasonable to assume there are many more homeowners situated just like them on this shoreline.

The most fortunate as well as the least fortunate of our citizens – and all of us in between – are equally entitled to respect and good will from those elected to fairly govern us all under the law. A lamentable arrogance is displayed when this principle is violated, whichever of the diverse individuals or groups comprising our community is disparaged.

Sincerely,

Diane M. Patterson

12237 Shorewood Lane SW