

FLOATING HOMES
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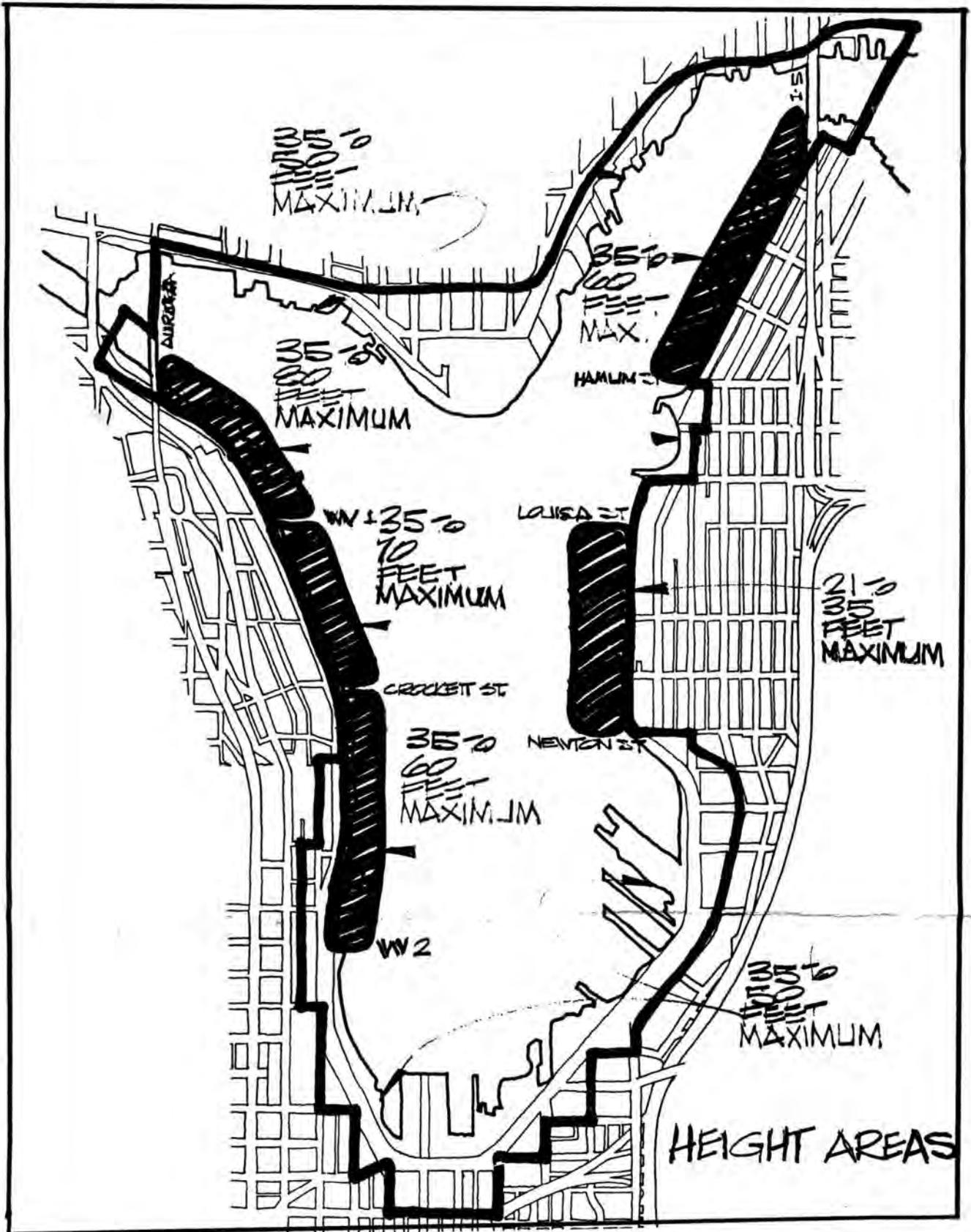
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Newsletter

July 1973

In Suggested "Lake Union Review District" Ordinance:

OVER-WATER HIGH RISES PROPOSED



(SEE STORY PAGE 2)

CITY SUGGESTS LAKE UNION REVIEW DISTRICT

A formula which would permit the construction of over-water apartment buildings or condominiums up to 80 feet high in certain areas, is contained in the draft ordinance establishing a "Lake Union Special Review District" now being circulated for discussion purposes. The proposal will in due time be the subject of public hearings before the Planning Commission. The City Council and Citizens Shorelines Advisory Committee now working on a master program for all of Seattle's shorelines.

Prepared by Gerry Jones, Lake Union Coordinator, the proposed ordinance creates a Review Board of six members to be appointed by the mayor subject to council confirmation. The Board would review, hold public hearings, and make recommendations to the City and/or State for all proposed developments. The lake would be divided into sub-areas with the land use controls superseding present zoning. The District would not include the Portage Bay area.

The State Shorelines Management Act does permit (if state and local governments agree) to heights in excess of 35 feet under certain conditions. The proposed ordinance provides for the increased heights of from 50 to 80 feet (if the developer includes "elective improvements" which are for "public use" or in the "public interest". They are defined in the ordinance as transient moorage, useable street level or water level open space, roof or elevated open space, pedestrian connection and street level arcade. The ordinance also requires that the water level or the street level of any development be exclusively for a "water-needing" use. The one area where the increased heights would not be permitted would be from Louisa and Newton Sts. on Fairview Ave. E. where the permitted uses would be only for floating homes or boat moorages. (For heights permitted in the various sub-areas see the map on page one.)

As in any land use control ordinance the formulas are technical and need and are getting careful scrutiny by many interested individuals and groups including our Association. But a preliminary examination of the 60-70 and 80 foot sub areas on Westlake N. has caused the Executive Committee to express its "grave concern" to the City. The Executive Committee statement is published in full below.

As the map shows the sub-area where residential structures of 60 or more feet in height are between Hamlin and the University Bridge on Fairview E. and in three sub-areas on Westlake from State Waterway 2 to the Aurora bridge on Westlake N. The high-rise residential structures on Westlake would be exempt from off-street parking requirements.

The proposal does contain restrictions. The percentage of the lot width permitted to be occupied by a structure at street level would range from 60% for 35 feet in height to 40% for a structure 80 feet in height. However in all instances the developer would be permitted to cover 60% of the total lot with an over-water platform which could extend off shore to the property line. It should be noted that all of the privately owned property in the Westlake area sub-zones is under water. Also no single structure could be wider at street level than 150 feet.

The ordinance also provides that the bulk area of any structure under the "elective improvements" formula could be double the total lot size. This as well as the other restrictions, and the creation of the Lake Union Special Review District are reportedly being opposed as too restrictive by certain property owners and the Lake Union Association.

The Association did not receive a copy of the proposed ordinance until after our May 16th and May 30th general membership meetings. The City asked for comments by June 30 and after a meeting with Gerry Jones on June 25th the Executive Committee approved the following statement under date of June 28th. It reads as follows:

"Our Association appreciates this opportunity to give you our preliminary reactions to the proposed 'Lake Union Special Review District' ordinance prior to the June 30th deadline. As you are aware the following is the result of the first full scale discussion on the draft proposal by our Executive Committee on June 25th. We will flesh out our comments on areas of approval as well as concern as the matter progresses and is given consideration by the Planning Commission, the Citizens Shorelines Advisory Committee and the City Council.

"The Executive Committee supports the concept of the creation of a Lake Union Special Review District with land use controls as an overlay to the present zoning. We find that the division of the shorelines into 'sub-areas' and the use of 'elective improvements' are innovative mechanisms which, carefully applied, could go far in achieving the objectives outlined in the 'Goals, Objectives & Policies' for Lake Union now incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. (Note: These were published in full in the April, 1973, NEWSLETTER.)

"However, we must emphasize our unanimous concern over those portions of the proposed ordinance which could permit over-water structures of 60, 70 and 80 feet in height. These penetrations of the 35-foot 'norm' suggested in the Shorelines Management Act of 1971, is, in our opinion, in contradiction to the intent of the law and of the amended Comprehensive Plan which says in the preamble:

'In the early 1960's it became clear to the citizens of Seattle that the natural lake could be obliterated if present trends continue. As unplanned and unregulated fills, dredging and construction intruded into the lake, a swell of public opinion arose demanding measures to both preserve the natural beauty of the lake for all the people and to protect and expand the commercial marine and recreational activities so necessary to the boating capital of the world.' (our emphasis)

We find the reference to the undesirability of "construction intruded into the lake" pertinent in view of the provisions allowing the platforms to cover 60% of the lake. The intrusion into the lake would be limited only by the lot line which means up to 192 feet in the Westlake area.

The burying of such vast areas of open water under concrete platforms seems to us to be a "non-reverseable" decision as to our limited water resources. These huge platforms, which are in fact "fills", and the structures built thereon, will be something that future generations will have to live with. These seem to us to be sacrificing long-term benefits for short-term financial gains for private developers.

We are particularly concerned at the threat to commercial marine activities by the proposals for 60, 70 and 80 foot over-water apartments or condominiums in certain Westlake sub-areas in view of the fact that these structures would be exempt from off-street parking requirements. We do not see how the requirements for the first floor to be devoted to water-needing purposes can protect the many small, commercial marine businesses now located in that area. This seems to us to be a flagrant contradiction to the stated purpose of the "Lake Union Action Program: Phase II" to impose land controls under which "no single use should be allowed to become dominant . . ."

We also believe that such an out of balance use of the lake surface contradicts the intent of Mayor Uhlman who, in announcing the Action Program, wrote in part: "The time has come to declare that the interests of people must be paramount and to move forward with proposals for a new zoning pattern on Lake Union which will encourage its diversity while protecting its unique features."

Even a casual survey shows that from Crockett St. North to the Aurora bridge on Westlake there is a heavy concentration of marinas, boat sales and repairs and other water-requiring uses. We doubt that these businesses, which are essential to the "boating capital of the world", and are one of Lake Union's "unique features", can survive the onslaught of over-water, luxury residential buildings. For example we note that the "Lake Union '72" report, made for the Lake Union Association, has this to say about the market for these structures:

"Lake Union certainly offers amenities and views which are unsurpassed in Seattle and it would appear that apartments or condominiums built around "the boating theme" would be in great demand. In fact we cannot see any satisfied demand in this regard and it would appear that a short-term demand exists for at least a thousand units over the next few years provided that these units will be supplied both with mooring and parking areas."

"In brief we believe that this could be a disaster for the Westlake area and destroy the very features we believe the people want to protect as a priceless city asset. In presenting this we wish to express our appreciation for the opportunities you have given us for free, frank and friendly discussion."

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OFFICERS ELECTED: POLL TAKEN ON HEIGHT LIMITATION

John Southern, 2207 Fairview Ave. E., was re-elected president of the Association at the 11th annual business meeting May 16th at the Montlake Recreational Center. At this and another general membership meeting May 30th the matter of proposed floating home regulations under a "Lake Union Special Review District" was the center of discussion.

Other officers elected are: Richard Wagner, 2770, re-elected vice-president; Delphine Haley, 2822 Boyer E., recording secretary; Dagmar Cronn, 2460 Westlake N., trustee; Ronald Ritz, 2727 Fairview; James Schermer, 2770 Westlake and Greg Smith, 2017 Fairview, members of the Executive Committee.

Other Executive Committee members are: Julie North, 2339 Fairview, treasurer; Terry Pettus, 2035 Fairview, administrative secretary; James J. Donnett, 2339 Fairview; Mack Hopkins, 1213 E. Shelby, Todd Warmington, 2339 Fairview and Timothy McNeil, 2460 Westlake, trustees.

Proposed height limitations for floating homes is the subject of a mail poll voted by the executive committee as a result of varying opinions. Some 100 members signed a petition suggesting 16 feet. The executive committee approved 14 feet and the City is suggesting 21 feet. Ballots are still coming in but as of July 2 here are the results: 14 feet, 66 in favor, 16 feet, 42 in favor; 21 feet, 44 in favor. One vote 35 feet.

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WAVE OF THE FUTURE? "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity which belongs to us. When we see land as a commodity to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect." Aldo Leopold

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"BITING THE BULLET" "For ten years lakeshore property owners have resisted proposed zoning changes which they fear will lower the economic value of the properties. The shorelands, however, are a public trust, held for all the people and their descendants. The time has come to declare that the interest of the people must be paramount and to move forward with proposals for a new zoning pattern on Lake Union which will encourage its diversity while protecting its unique features." Mayor Wes Uhlman, in announcing the "Lake Union Action Program: Phase II."

NEW NOTE ON "PROPERTY RIGHTS": "An owner of land has no absolute and unlimited right to change the essential character of the land so as to use it for a purpose for which it was unsuited in its natural state and which injures the right of others." Wisconsin Supreme Court in an opinion upholding the state's shoreline protection act.

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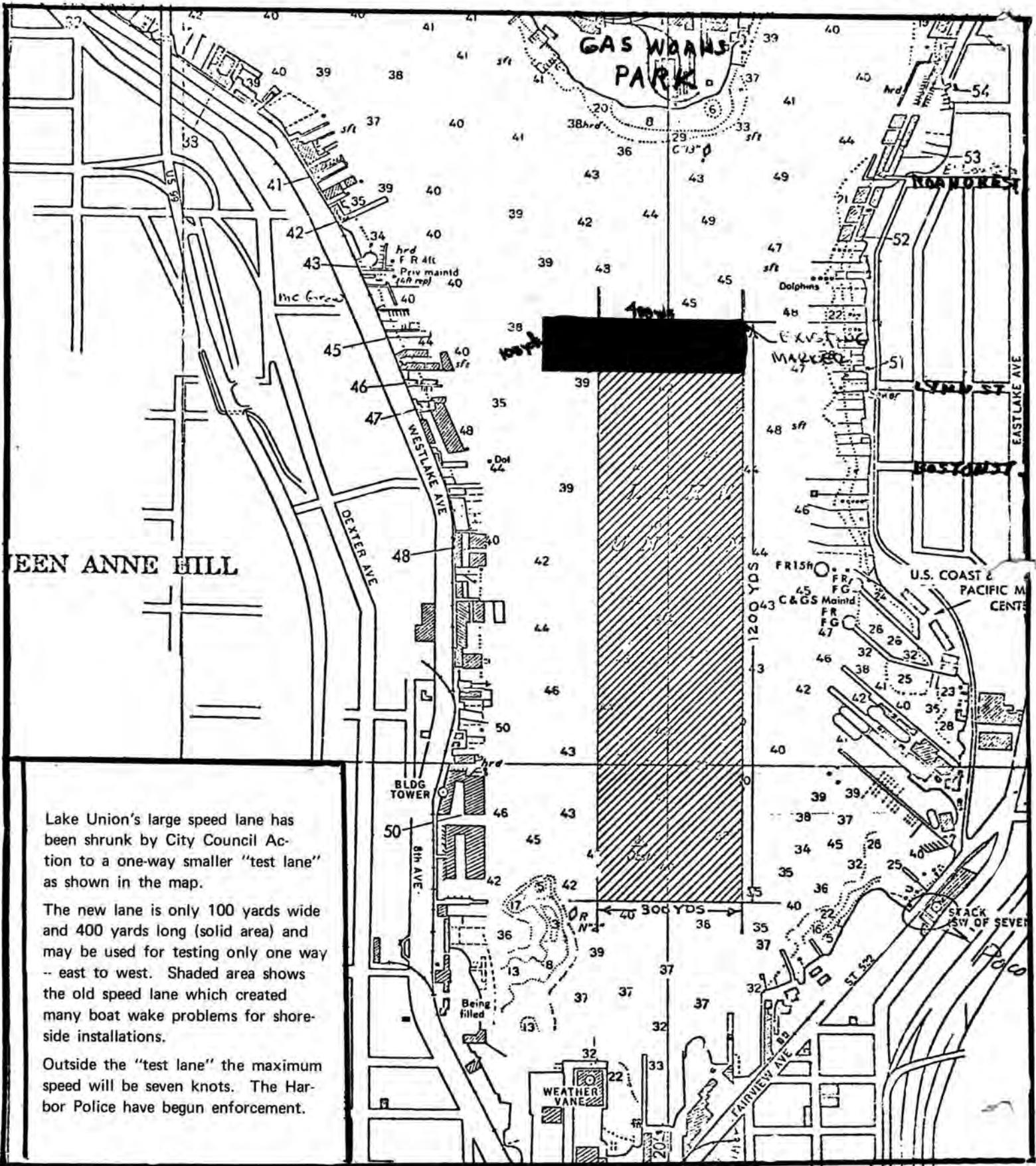
IF WE ONLY COULD: "We shall have to learn to refrain from doing things merely because we know how to do them." Theodore Fox.

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FORMULA FOR A LIVEABLE CITY: "If Seattle is to remain a liveable city and to be a great city -- it must plan its future -- not simply plan for the future but attempt to shape it to what its citizens desire." Douglass A. Raff, chairman, Seattle 2000 Commission.

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NEW 1-WAY TEST LANE ON LAKE UNION



Lake Union's large speed lane has been shrunk by City Council Action to a one-way smaller "test lane" as shown in the map.

The new lane is only 100 yards wide and 400 yards long (solid area) and may be used for testing only one way -- east to west. Shaded area shows the old speed lane which created many boat wake problems for shore-side installations.

Outside the "test lane" the maximum speed will be seven knots. The Harbor Police have begun enforcement.

FLOATING HOMES ASSOCIATION
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