

Sisley Slums Cause Controversy

Developers and neighborhood clash over land use

Emily Shugerman

Staff Reporter

A fixture on the landscape of Roosevelt, the "Sisley Slums" are the run-down houses located on the block west of 15th and 65th. Also endearingly referred to as the "crack shacks" or "ghetto houses", these buildings are rental houses owned by the infamous landlords Drake and Hugh Sisley. The Sisleys own more than forty pieces of property in Northeast Seattle, and have a bad reputation amongst both locals and city officials. In fifteen years these brothers have acquired 48 housing and building maintenance code violations, and have also been accused of racist renting policies. In his defense, Drake Sisley says that bad renters are to

blame for the accumulating violations. No matter what the reason, the houses have become a well-known eye sore - but the neighborhood may not have to deal with them for much longer.

The property, run-down as it may be now, is actually a hot spot for development. The proposed installation of a light-rail station in the neighborhood makes the surrounding area a great place to create dense housing, and developers are taking note. The Roosevelt Development Group of Seattle has gained development rights for the Roosevelt area properties owned by the Sisley brothers. Their plans for the property have yet to be finalized, but many signs point to a much more population-dense development being erected. The Roosevelt/Ravenna neighborhood plan has already been updated to provide for more population density. Also, Hugh Sisley has been looking to change the zoning for the site to allow for more units per acre. There have been rumors circulating that the developers aim to build a ten story apartment building, sparking conflict within the neighborhood.

Some clues as to what type of buildings may be popping up next to Roosevelt can be found in the Environmental Impact Statement from the Roosevelt

Development Group. An Environmental Impact Statement is a required investigation for all developers when they begin the development process. The developers must submit all potential building heights to be inspected for their possible impact on the environment. So far the Roosevelt Development Group has submitted building heights of 30 to 160 feet to be investigated. Considering that 160 feet is more than three times the height of RFS, this proposal has caused more than a little concern within the neighborhood.

The Roosevelt Neighborhood Association (RNA) - a group of neighbors from around the Roosevelt area - have taken action. The RNA hosted a meeting recently to discuss the issue. City councilwoman Sally Clark was in attendance, along with almost 200 apprehensive neighbors. One such neighbor was Mark Weybright, who said, "The school is the heartbeat of the community. You can't cover that with a cement wall," echoing the concerns of most of the neighbors in attendance. Many community members were also worried about the safety of students if traffic was to increase due to higher

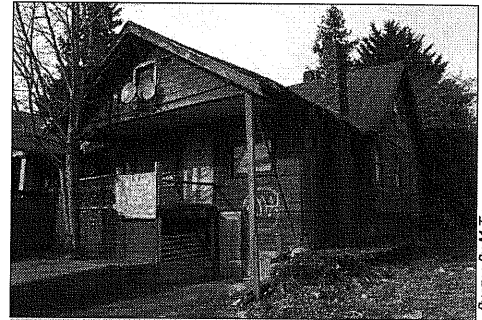


PHOTO BY M. TULL

Another house located in the Sisley Slums. The Roosevelt Neighborhood Association is resentful of the possibility of a ten story building replacing the Sisley Slums.

population density. They also wondered how a large development would impact the learning environment at Roosevelt.

One group of concerned neighbors even did some research into the heights of buildings surrounding other public schools in Seattle. They found that no other public school has a building as tall as 160 feet on any side of it. In fact, no other schools have buildings over 40 feet directly next to them. The Roosevelt Development Group did attend the meeting, and developer Ed Hewson told us that he was "looking forward to putting in some nice buildings." Only time will tell how they choose to deal with the conflicts surrounding this property.



One of the houses located in the Sisley Slums, with Roosevelt in the background.

What Local Stores Say About Teen Shoplifters

Elaine Colligan

Staff Reporter

As American wallets become uncomfortably light, some citizens are resorting to the "five-fingered discount" while shopping. A survey conducted by the Retail Industry Leaders Association found that 84% of retailers reported an increase in theft from their stores since the recession hit, adding more to the 35 billion dollars lost annually due to shoplifting. Who is to blame for this massive loss? Unsurprisingly, about a quarter of all apprehended shoplifters are teens, and Roosevelt students aren't an exception.

Any Roughrider who has been to Whole Foods during the midday lunch rush knows how busy the store becomes.

Long lines, occupied tables, and a crowded checkout area contribute to a hectic atmosphere - perfect for shoplifting, as one student shoplifter remarked. In fact, Shoplifters Alternative, a national recovery organization, estimates that one out of every eleven Americans has shoplifted before, and one out of every four teenagers surveyed had committed this crime. Because of this high statistic, Roughriders shouldn't be surprised when their backpacks and youthful faces earn them extra attention from employees at QFC.

The manager at Roosevelt Square's Whole Foods says that, although he recognizes and appreciates the business that honest Roughriders do with Whole

Foods, he is fully aware of the crimes some students commit during their lunch hour.

The



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most common way students steal is taking more than one piece of food from the prepared food trays. "Especially in the meat department, people come through the store and abuse our sampling policy," he said. Seem like an easy, free way to have a meal? Think twice. The legal consequences for shoplifting are, though more relaxed for adolescents than adults, severe.

After being caught and detained by security personnel, a teen shoplifter will be arrested by the police and taken into custody. Depending on the case and whether or not it is a first

offense, the shoplifter will either be released to his/her parents, or be sent to a juvenile court or office where an appropriate punishment will be given. Possible penalties include jail, fines, community service, or being banned from the store they shoplifted from.

Is shoplifting really worth it? Most teens steal for thrill and excitement; others because they don't have enough money to buy products at full price. However, a petty crime like shoplifting will go on file as a misdemeanor and, although colleges don't have access to such records, questions about past crimes appear on many job applications.

Our school motto states, "What I am to be, I am now becoming." Let's hope that "kleptomaniac" isn't in the future of any Roughrider.