

**Dela Cruz, Jeff**

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**From:** Save Madison Valley <savemadval@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 04, 2017 8:59 PM  
**To:** PRC  
**Subject:** Challenge to Jim Keany's assessment of habitat

**Vibrant Urban Forest Corridor or Degraded Habitat Patch?**

Save Madison Valley challenges the data, findings and conclusions of the habitat assessment memo submitted May 23, 2017, by Jim Keany of Environmental Science Associates on behalf of the applicant.

When it comes to the urban forest on this site, the applicant has, at every step in the design and permitting process, minimized, distorted and used tortured logic to support their claim that the forest must be eradicated. However, Keany's use of alternative facts to justify the destruction of this urban green space and animal habitat proposes the most egregious distortions to date. Keany's findings are quoted below, followed, in bold italics, by Save Madison Valley's rebuttal to those findings:

"About 75% of the vegetated hillslope behind the buildings/parking lot is dominated by a dense ground layer of Himalayan blackberry. On the north end of the slope (toward powerline crossing) blackberry is the only vegetation covering the slope, forming a dense, impenetrable layer."

***These statements are false – City People's Nursery planted dozens of native species several years ago and maintained them until recently when the property was sold. The "dense, impenetrable layer" of blackberry described is actually on SDOT property, not the City People's site***

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"Further south along the slope, the vegetation transitions to include tree cover, but a dense blackberry understory is present within most of the treed slope, limiting native vegetation undergrowth. Only near the south end of the property line is there minimal blackberry occurrence. English ivy, an invasive vine, also occurs in dense patches throughout the site and has climbed the trunks of many of the trees on the site up to 50 feet high. Japanese knotweed, an invasive perennial, also occurs on the site in scattered areas..."

***This statement is an exaggeration of the degraded conditions on the site and describes only a small portion of the hillside. Here is what urban ecologist, Matthew Patterson (an urban ecologist hired by SMV) wrote of the very same area:***

***"The sloped, canopy rich portion of the City People development site in Madison Valley (facing Dewey Pl E) is best characterized as early successional forest for the Puget Sound lowlands...The understory of the site varies along a north-to- south gradient, with the southern end of the slope with a relatively clear understory. As one moves north out of the densely closed canopy of the cedars into a grove of broadleaf maple and cherries, invasive ivy and blackberries begin to be present. The north (quite steep) end of the slope under the more open canopy of poplars and more sparsely distributed maples is largely dominated by blackberry canes."***

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"Few birds were observed using the dense blackberry habitat patch but those observed included species common to urban areas such as song sparrow, Bewick's wren, and American crow. Additional common species were observed in the treed portion of the site including black-capped chickadee, yellow-rumped warbler, bush tit, Anna's hummingbird, red-

shafted flicker, Steller’s jay, and American robin. All of these species are commonly found in Seattle residential neighborhoods where some tree cover is available.”

***This statement excludes the many plant and animal species observed on the site. It also does not portray accurately the importance of the area for animals using this hillside to pass through into the Arboretum to the north, and Harrison Ridge/Madrona to the south. Here is a list of recently observed species that Madison Valley neighbors compiled:***

**Common Birds:**

**Anna’s Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Steller’s Jay, Western Scrub, Jay Corvids (including the American and/or Northwestern Crow) Black-capped Chickadee, Bushtit Bewick’s, Wren Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Spotted Towhee (formerly called Rufous-sided Towhee), Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco House Finch, Golden-crowned Sparrow (seasonal, i.e., all winter), House Sparrow**

**Occasional Birds**

Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rock Pigeon, Downy Woodpecker, Violet-green Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Pacific Wren (formerly called Winter Wren), Golden-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Goldfinch

**Rare Birds**

Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Barred Owl, House Wren, Western Tanager

**Plants**

English Ivy, Himalayan Blackberry, Dicentra Formosa (bleeding heart), Tiarella Trifoliolate (foam flower), Red Elderberry, Ocean Spray, Tall Oregon Grape, Nootka Rose, Mock Orange, Honeysuckle Vine, Maple Sword Fern, Salal, Ninebark, Pea Fruit Rose, Snowberry, Indian Plum

**Trees**

Red Alder, Bigleaf Maple, Zebrina Western, Lombardy Poplar, Flowering Cherry, Katsura, English Holly Tree, Shore Pine, Douglas Fir

**Mammals**

Raccoons, Rats, Coyotes, Squirrels, Rabbits, Moles, Voles, Mice

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“While the hillslope blackberry patch does connect to a small, steep vegetated parcel tucked in the hillslope between Madison Street and East Mercer Street, there is no further habitat corridor connection. The arboretum, across Madison Street, provides a significantly larger block of habitat in a park-like setting. But the small, vegetated hillslope behind the City People’s Garden store has no connection to the arboretum.”

***This is misleading and inaccurate. Here is how Wallis Bolz, neighbor and urban forest steward, responds to Keany’s statement: “If you state, as Keany does, that the City People’s site has no habitat value because it is separated from the Washington Park Arboretum by East Madison Street and has not earned a WDFW designation, you pretty much dismiss as habitat any property that is not a managed park landscape. You also dismiss important connections to the south of East Madison Street, and you ignore how animals move through our urban landscape.” (emphasis added)***

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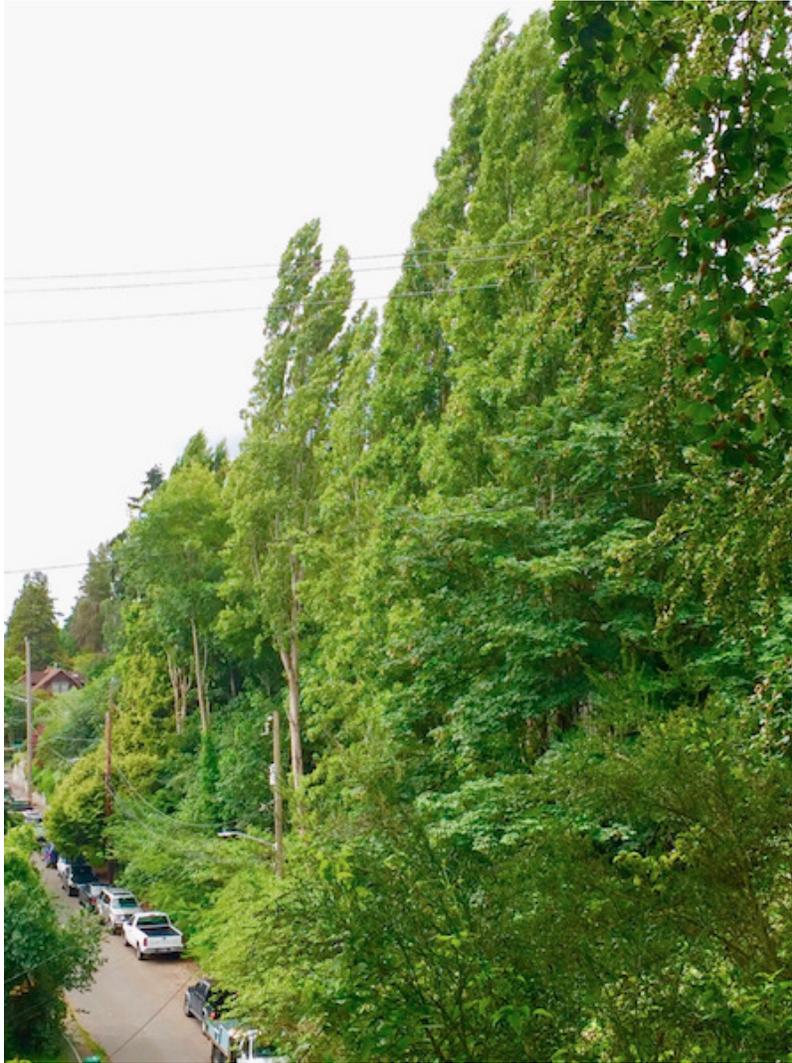
“The vegetated habitat patch on the slope behind the City People’s Garden Store is small, isolated, contains a high density of noxious weeds, has limited foliage height diversity – and thus is considered very low habitat value with no habitat corridor connections (See attached photos). The density of noxious weed species on the site affects the plant diversity and has a corresponding effect on the wildlife species use and further lowers the patch’s habitat value.”

***This description is false and the photo Keany provides to support these statements is distorted in order to be misleading. Below is Keany’s photo, taken from the edge of the P-patch and showing mainly the SDOT blackberry patch:***



***The actual site is described by Matthew Patterson: “The roughly 14,500 sq ft of tree canopy covers approximately 36% of the total parcel area...There are also snags (standing dead trees) within the parcel, which is relatively uncommon in Seattle outside of a greenbelt or other large, comparatively unmanaged forested site. Snags provide ecological value as nesting, roosting, caching, and foraging sites in this region for more than three dozen species of birds and a dozen species of small mammals.”***

***Below is a photo, taken from East Madison St, of the actual City People’s site along Dewey***



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Keany concludes: “In summary, the City People’s site does not provide quality habitat and is not part of a larger habitat unit. Mammals and birds likely to use the site are those common to Seattle’s urban neighborhoods. Development of the site will remove a dense infestation several weed species – Himalayan blackberry, Japanese knotweed, and English ivy. In addition, the landscaping plan for the proposed development includes a mix of native and ornamental groundcover, shrubs, and trees that will provide some habitat for urban wildlife, particularly resident and neotropical migrant songbirds.”

***Save Madison Valley vehemently disagrees with Keany’s apparent conclusion: that this unusual urban forest habitat will be improved by the development. Again, here is Matthew Patterson’s description of how the present canopy corridor functions: “The living trees and understory of the site provide a number of ecological services, both to wildlife and to the community and city. They obviously provide cover, nesting sites, flowers for pollinators, and fruit for both people and animals. In addition, they sequester carbon dioxide, and intercept, absorb, and transpire rainwater on a steep slope. Estimates from an analysis based on the inventory (using the iTree tool suite) conducted by the consulting arborist suggest that the trees on site sequester some 12,600 pounds of CO2 annually, and will sequester 170,000 pounds of carbon in total over their lifespan. Their canopy intercepts some 40,000 gallons of water annually.” The way this habitat functions currently makes Mr. Keany’s suggestion seem absurd – that removing 14,000 square feet of a***

***100 year-old urban forest and replacing it with 5000 square feet of small tree- and container plantings would improve the habitat and the ecological services it provides. It boggles the mind to suggest that the landscaping plan for the proposed development would improve, or even mitigate, the destruction of valuable ecological services that the current site offers. Save Madison Valley, as well as most of the surrounding Madison Valley community, opposes the destruction of this rare urban habitat, a destruction that violates city codes as well as the goals and policies set forth in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan (see pages 2-7 of Claudia Newman's 5/24/17 comment letter submitted to PRC on behalf of Save Madison Valley for the specific code and Comprehensive Plan citations).***