



Denny Regrade to Belltown

An on-going community journey

Beginning in the late 80's the long awaited development came to the Denny Regrade, a 216 acre section of Seattle strategically located between the downtown core and Seattle Center, and 5th and 6th Avenues to the waterfront. The Regrade received its name from the engineering fete undertaken at the beginning of the twentieth century which cut 100 feet off of the top of Denny Hill by sluicing it into Puget Sound. The purpose was to create an expansion area for Seattle's downtown. The depression and then the invention of steel framed buildings which allowed more density downtown stalled this expansion and the Regrade laid fallow for 50 years.

The cheap flat land attracted auto dealerships, union halls, acres of parking lots and births for sailors. In general this area was overlooked and considered undesirable by many. Artists discovered the convenient location and cheap rents so pockets of creativity began appear. When development finally broke loose, it wasn't an expansion of the downtown office core but a new type of high density residential community shaped by zoning changes in the mid 70's. A new urban lifestyle was appearing for Seattle.

When development finally came, it took off like a rocket with the economic success of the 90's and the dot com bubble. There were one or more construction cranes on every block for several years. Many of us in the Regrade looked forward to a more densely populated urban neighborhood but wondered what we could do to preserve some of the colorful cultural heritage the artists had developed especially after the arrival of the 6,500 additional residents expected by the year 2014 according to Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. This would increase density to 46.3 households per acre, by far the most densely populated neighborhood in Seattle. Change was inevitable but did it have to be total gentrification? Could the missions, low income housing and day labor centers co-exists with multi-million dollar condominiums and a fashionable restaurant district? What could the community do to help shape this development - to provide breathing room for the new density and to infuse it with a touch of nature and reality - to integrate the newcomers to the existing neighborhood fabric rather than to destroy it?

When I joined this community in 1992 the organizers of the fledgling Belltown P-Patch were taking on this challenge. They set about planning a community garden, a public realm where interaction among people of all income levels could take place, and where the urban experience could be tempered with nature providing opportunity for community building and stewardship. They were creating a vision for a community garden not to just feed the stomach, but to feed the soul. Their garden consisted of art, flowers and food and provided a connection to the land desperately needed in this neighborhood of increased density and wall to wall

paving. The Regrade was a location, but the name Belltown represented the heart and soul of the community and this valiant group set about saving and expanding that soul. Their motto was a “garden where plants and people flourish”. They were on to something and I wanted to help make it happen.

Downtown Experience

I was not new to living downtown. My artist husband and I literally dug open the sealed off basement of the first Pioneer Square building architect Ralph Anderson renovated at 1st and Jackson in 1964. Living downtown was so unique in Seattle at that time that the tour guides of the historic Seattle Underground Tours would point us out as “The family that lives downtown” if they saw us carrying our baby and groceries into our basement live / work studio.

From 1978 to 1994 my architecture office was located on the edge of the Public Place Market where I participated in the transformation of that area into a vital residential and restaurant community. In 1993 having just returned from a sabbatical in the heart of historic Rome and infused with the concept of streets as a social experience, I was ready for whatever might lay ahead in working to build a humane, environmentally sound vibrantly active streetscape in my newly adopted community

Introduction to Denny Regrade

When my family development partnership sold a building and needed to reinvest I began looking in the Regrade. Living on Queen Anne Hill I passed through the district twice a day and had been watching it for years. I was fairly confident that this was a location poised to appreciate faster than the Consumer Price Index and would be a good investment and an exciting place to be. Little did I know that it was about to explode.

The Frayn Building at Western and Vine came on the market at just this time. It was a simple three story brick building built as a box factory in 1914 with beautiful large windows grouped into pairs under graceful brick arches. The building had good bones. My first thought was that it was located too far from Belltown, the small center of activity in the Regrade, but the group lobbying for a community garden one half block further away had just named their project the Belltown P-Patch. I deduced that Belltown had just jumped over my site and we were indeed included.

Spirit of the Belltown P-Patch

Now the fact that I would be a neighbor to the Belltown P-Patch was an extraordinary plus for me. Although I didn't know much about the group, I had seen them in action a few years before and was captivated by their spirit. I attended most of the meetings of the selection committee for property purchases under the 1998 Open Space Bond Issue since a property owned by my development partnership was nominated for acquisition. The P-Patchers were at every meeting putting on a fantastic show to attract attention to their property. They came in vegetable and flower costumes with vegetable cookies. They wore bumble bee hats and decorated the sidewalk with colored chalk designs. Every meeting was a new approach to get attention. They were indomitable and, of course, they succeeded in getting their P-Patch. This was an amazing accomplishment given the stiff competition and the cost of the property at nearly \$500,000

Purchase of the Frayn Building

Along with the P-Patch, this neighborhood had other compelling attractions for me. One block south was a building which looked like it must be occupied by creative people since it was painted bright purple with yellow trim and covered with copper Jell-O molds while across Vine Street artist Koryn Rolstad was developing an exciting new loft style building and was nearly ready to begin construction. The Port was planning a World Trade Center a few blocks away and the Alaskan Way Viaduct went into a tunnel two blocks south so Vine Street flowed unobstructed to the waterfront. I made a pitch to my partners and we closed our purchase on the Frayn building December 1992.

Seeds of Growing Vine Street

When the first stage of renovation of the 81 Vine building was completed in 1994, I moved my office, Geise Architects, into the building. We delayed our open house since much of 1994 and 1995 I was preparing for the United Nations International Conference for Women in Beijing, China. This experience of this conference substantially changed my values and outlook on community. I realized how much more we have in resources than most of the world and what a relatively poor job we often do in using them wisely. I felt compelled to put into practice some of the changes in values by contributing much more to building community right in my own back yard. So when we got around to our open house in November of 1995 the idea of spending lots of money to eat, drink and show off our work sounded very consumptive to me. Instead we used the event as an opportunity to bring our new community together to plan together how we could support the P-Patch plan to expand into Vine Street. The P-Patch had discovered Vine Street was designated as a level I "Green Street" in the City's 1986 master plan. This classification allowed for pedestrian development into the street and even closing off to traffic if desired so the door was open for a project.

Meanwhile, I was running into problems with the "Green Street" requirement for development of the sidewalk at the Frayn building now named the 81 Vine Building. City officials didn't seem to agree as to exactly what was required when developing along a "Green Street" so after spending thousands of dollars on civil engineering and hours going from the Building Department to Engineering which had control of the street right of way, to the City Arborist and around again, I proposed to the City that since the first phase of our building was just remodeling the existing building we should be allowed to leave the sidewalk as is. The phase 2 addition of 7 penthouse units would trigger the requirements for upgrading sidewalks and hopefully by then "Green Street" requirements would be more clear.

In the meantime Glenn MacGilvra and I began to gather a community group around the issue of how Vine Street could be developed under the Green Street ordinance especially beside the P-Patch. Soon Glenn and I were writing the first grant to Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods (DON) for \$42,000 to hire a consultant to prepare a concept design for Vine Street based upon bioregional principles and celebrating water. At about 3 am while putting the finishing touches on the application Glenn added the title "Growing Vine Street" which has served well to title our vision.

Steering Committee Formed

Word of the Growing Vine Street project spread and our small group grew to 15 to 20 committed individuals who attended meetings at least twice a month for over 18 months during 1996 and 1997 to develop preliminary design considerations in preparation for hiring a design team. A primary concern was to Incorporating ecosystem based design to bring natural elements back to the city. Inspired by the idealism of the young people in our group such as aspiring transportation planner Peter Voorhees, and architect David Craven, we boldly claimed the full 8 blocks of Vine Street as a watershed and defined some ecosystem design guidelines. We invited artist Buster Simpson to these meetings since a friend told me he was interested in the area and storm water solutions. He was an inspiring participant in developing the concept of treating and playing with the storm water.

We organized continuous events to raise money and awareness of the project such as the First Annual Garage Sale and Street Fair in 1996, 2nd Annual Garage Sale and Tour of Homes and Artist Studios with a StreetScape Art and Ideas Competition in 1997 and a St Patrick's Day Greening of Vine Street and Vine Street Potlatch in 2001. These events and the many meetings were successful as fund raisers, but more importantly they served to unite and define this new community and brought new comers and old timers together around a common goal.

Neighborhood Planning

Simultaneously the Neighborhood Planning process began in Belltown and ran from April 1996 to December 1998. This was a community driven process which received City funding so communities hired their own planning consultants and the city provided staff to help keep the process moving. The core values developed by the Denny Regrade Organizing Committee which included many GVS members were as follows:

The Denny Regrade Neighborhood is an urban community concerned with quality of life and built on: social equity, economic viability, environmental stewardship, security and respect for its cultural historical traditions.

For much of the process the Growing Vine Street Steering Committee served as the Pedestrian Environment Committee for the planning group and the neighborhood planning process served as a vehicle to air the problems we were running up against in proceeding on a community driven street design that was actually a storm water infrastructure. Growing Vine Street really served as a test case raising issues that prevented well designed green streets so the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group (DUCPG), a coalition of the 5 downtown neighborhoods including the Denny Regrade, chose to invest some of their planning money into a study of the obstacles and solutions to permitting, constructing and maintaining Green Streets.

Selecting a Design Team

By July of 1997 the Steering Committee had defined goals and developed design guidelines and we were ready to advertise for a design team. Eight excellent teams responded and we interviewed three. Seventeen members of the committee spent most of a Saturday conducting the interviews and making the decision. It was an exciting event and we the realization finally hit us that we were actually going to build something wonderful. Our selection was a multidisciplinary firm organized by Carlson Architects consisting of Don Carlson –architect and urban designer,

Greg Waddell- planner, Peggy Gaynor landscape architect, and Buster Simpson environmental artist. Aidan Stretch, Sustainable Development Group and Marni Heffron, Heffron Transportation also provided input. We recognized the challenge of working with such a strong diverse group, but they fit our vision of being bold, brave, and ecologically based and we felt the different talents, ranges of experience and styles would resonate with the varied constituents in our community. Buster was a plus since he was already recognized as the Regrade Artist and his work typified the spirit we were trying to capture.

Insert photo of committee interviewing the Design Team

Design Concept Development

The Design Team picked right up on the project goals and carried them forward into a coordinated concept. After many community meetings to gather input and present preliminary concepts, the Design Team and Steering Committee published the Growing Vine Street Concept Design in June 1998. This was an 11 x 17 document of 50 pages describing the philosophy and the concept design.

The eight block length of Vine Street was treated as a watershed with storm water collected into cisterns and a runnel traveling down the a wide strip of native landscaping providing bio-filtration for the water. The goal was to connect this runnel block by block and to eventually allow clean water to go directly into Elliott Bay. The concept design was divided into three zones, an entry portal at each end, the “flats” between 5th and 1st avenues and the “slopes” between 1st and Alaskan Way and Elliott Bay. Street traffic is maintain, but is one way east. On the slopes the lane angles to the alley and back and runs straight on the flats. Some parking is given up to the green – a necessary trade off.

To accommodate the idea of this street as a laboratory for urban storm water solutions and the incremental adoptions of the concept by the community, the design team developed a “kit of parts” or a guideline for development. This kit is a collection of flexible design elements that create a design framework and provide guidance to the long-term development. They articulated four core concepts of function and structure. First, the street functions as a one way driving lane east with some back in parking. Second is the recognition of storm water runoff as a design resource to be exposed and integrated into the green street philosophy. Third is the “greening” of the street corridor including the greening of buildings and fourth is the premise that the greening of Vine Street is an enduring social event in the spirit of the Belltown P-Patch providing a venue for creative contributions and engagement of the community.

This infra-structure project addressed the issue of regular sewer overflow into Puget Sound. Belltown has a combined sewer and storm water system. And during our first few years in the 81 Vine Building, our intersection at Western and Vine would flood fifteen minutes after a heavy rain. The manhole in the street would be forced up as the serge of water tried to make a hard right turn north to the sewer treatment plant at Fort Lawton 8 miles away. This storm water and sewage that doesn't make the turn overflows into Puget Sound.

Statistics for 2001 show that Seattle had 556 overflow events which dumped 272 million gallons of sewage tainted water into our natural water systems. Obviously

reducing the storm water run off will reduce or eliminate this.

Our motto was store the water, enjoy and play with the water, irrigate with the water but don't just send it down a black hole to get rid of it. The project was a winner and people flocked to hear about it and participate.

Community Outreach & Imprinting the Concept

Development accelerated with new people moving into the community by the hundreds. Growing Vine Street meetings became updates to the community about how our project was developing as well as information about the new development in the neighborhood. It seemed that almost every week a new high rise apartment or condo was announced to be in the planning stages. We made a huge map of the neighborhood and pinned up articles on proposed new buildings. The reality of the growth explosion began to sink in and the corresponding need to creating a humane pedestrian environment stimulated interest in our project.

There were eight major projects in the planning stage on the eight block length of Vine Street during the time the design concept was developing. Members of the Steering Committee or Design Team met with each of these developers to encourage them to take our concept into consideration. Although none of them incorporated water features, several made landscaping or detail gestures which were supportive. Once the Growing Vine Street design concept was approved by the Seattle Design Commission and the new City department, City Design, was formed to advocate urban design, the City made an effort to require developers on Vine Street to embrace the concept although it was mostly voluntary since not financial incentives were available.

We took our show on the road presenting to community groups, the Design Commission, Committees of the Seattle City Council, and conferences. The idea began to take hold. Growing Vine Street became part of the vocabulary of other Seattle communities and City officials as an example of an innovative, community driven approach to urban storm water solutions and community building. Our credibility was strengthened when we received a 1999 Ahwahnee Award at a governmental conference in San Diego.

In December 2001, the project received a commendation from the Seattle Design Commission with comments such as:

- ...breaking the mold and pursuing a project that demonstrates true innovation in the public realm:
- ...brings urban ecosystems back into view, educating the public on the natural environmental systems in urban areas.
- ..exemplifies a community-based planning process wherein great pains were taken to develop clear and cogent design principles that would endure through all phases of implementation.
- „Cistern Steps give evidence of a complete and truly integrated design team, bringing together the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture and public art.

81 Vine Building Growing Vine Street Projects

With the economy rising in 1997, my development partners decided to proceed with the second phase of adding penthouses on the 81 Vine Building and converting the building to condominiums. This triggered the requirement for sidewalk improvements but Growing Vine Street was still working its way through meetings with the city to solve technical issues. My partners generously agreed to wait for Growing Vine Street which required putting off our sidewalk work for two years and posting a \$25,000 bond in order to secure a temporary occupancy permit so we could sell the units.

The 81 Vine Building actually included three Growing Vine Street projects. The roof terraces serves as headwaters to Growing Vine Street with water carried from the roof over the terrace in two graceful bow truss downspouts which feed into a linear galvanized culvert planter with a water distribution system. Water overflowing the planter or collected on the roof is directed through new scuppers in the parapet to get the rainwater to the exterior to supply Growing Vine Street. The downspout on the west is a Buster Simpson green downspout which has four stainless steel planter loops, The east downspout drained into the gutter for two years and eventually hooked up to the Beckoning Cistern designed by Buster and funded by the Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

The Beckoning Cistern is magical. This huge blue metal cistern is set on a platform canted slightly toward the building with a green metal hand extending up out of it with the index finger reaching over the sidewalk to touch the downspout which angles out from the building to deposit the roof runoff into the extended finger. People come to see it when it rains as water flows from the thumb into the planting and then from pool to pool. Buster Simpson and Peggy Gaynor worked with architect Judy Tucker from Geise Architects on this project with special structural consultation by Swenson Say Faget.

Photo of 81 Vine Building Terrace

Photo of Beckoning Cistern

I have to give a great deal of credit to my development partners for the fact that we were able to see this project through. They were patient with both time and money far beyond what might be expected for a project of our size. My son Matt Geise is the manager of the company so I had the pleasure of working with him for the 14 years we struggled through design, construction, conversion to condominiums, sale of the units, warrantee and close out. Matt and I did the hands on work while Matt's cousins Kim, Mark, Kristiann and Eric Schoening gave us support or left us alone which ever was appropriate at the time. They took a big risk in supporting my request to expose our roof drainage system and to agree to the Beckoning Cistern. Before the project was finished the Home Owner's Association had taken over the management of the building and they graciously endorsed the project and took on the related responsibilities. Buster didn't let us down. The result is spectacular.

Other attempts to influence development in the community

Our committee was bold in our efforts.. In the fall of 1997 we made a valiant attempt to garner support for converting the Skyway property, a great manufacturing

building and former salmon cannery at the foot of Vine Street, into an art center which would form the entry into Belltown from the waterfront. We made several offers to buy the property based upon anticipated fund raising, but the property was eventually leased to a developer for 99 years. It has been sitting idle since the dot com bust.

In the spring of 1998 I secured a signed earnest money to purchase the last two factory houses on Western Avenue across the street from the Banner Building, ½ block from the P-Patch. This was one of four parcels in the ½ block and it was ripe for development. By buying the center lot I rationalized that we could keep the scale of development down and maybe eventually acquire the south lot on Vine Street for expansion of the P-Patch. A quick development proforma for re-building the two story buildings plus basements and adding additional artist units on the alley showed a need for a \$300,000 subsidy to make this lowrise development possible. I failed to raise the money in the short time available since I couldn't make the case convincingly enough to owners in the Banner Building that contributing to this project would save their view as well as a historic community treasure. Shortly afterwards the property sold to Fortune Company who acquired the other lots and presented to the community their plan for two condominium towers to the maximum 125 foot height. Now the neighbors were interested when they could envision these building towering over the neighborhood and a strange thing happened. A tenant of one of the buildings sold to Fortune, Center for Contemporary Arts (COCA), had a clause in their lease that gave them a right of first refusal to buy the building. Koryn Rolstad, a board member of COCA and resident & developer of the Banner Building discovered this and she and Keith Kegley, another resident of the community, paid up COCA's back rent and exercised the option to buy the building.

Fortune Company now found that they owned only three of the four parcels and could not build their proposed project. The organization Keith and Koryn formed, Vine Street Associates, negotiated with Fortune and ended up writing a contract to sell the property with certain development restrictions which allowed one tower on the north end and a mid rise on the south end so the building would terrace down to preserve some views from the Banner Building and be in better scale with the P-Patch. Fortune Company sold the property to Intracorp who finished negotiating the development restrictions which now included an agreement to build a cistern to collect roof water which would eventually provide water for the Cistern Steps, the portion of the Growing Vine Street design that would parallel the Belltown P-Patch

Opportunity To Build the Cistern Steps

Now we had a developer near enough to the P-Patch who was willing to channel their roof water across the street to feed the Cistern Steps. John Eskelin and Elisabeth Butler from Department of Neighborhoods stepped up and negotiated an Opportunity Grant from the City in the amount of \$200,000 so the Cistern Steps portion of Growing Vine Street could proceed and integrate with the new development. We were now officially on our way to construct the second Growing Vine Street demonstration project. This endorsement of our project gave us additional credibility at a time when people were getting a little weary of talking about what we planned to do. We needed positive action to encourage our weary volunteers and this was just the ticket.

Engineering Drawings and the Permitting Process

Our original Design team with the addition of SvR Design Company were commissioned by the city to proceed with design refinement and permit documents. SvR was brought in as civil engineers who grasped the significance of this project and who have a strong landscape architecture base to give breadth to the engineering. The Design Team project manager, Gregg Waddell kept the design moving forward and valiantly negotiated his way through the technical hurdles.

I'm used to complex and conflicting codes and regulations but I had no idea how difficult it would be to build a non standard design in the street right of way. Although most city officials were inspired by the idea and wanted to help, the official standards and procedures made it difficult. We often came to the point where I would tell the city reviewer to just say "no" if that's what their rules told them to do and I would take it up to the mayor or the council. I knew it was policy that had to change from the top and Mayor Paul Schell was wonderful in setting that policy of support. His motto was "Neighborhoods that accept density will get amenities" and we certainly were getting the density.

In February 1999 Mayor Schell and department heads authorized a technical team to work with our Design Team and Steering Committee to address the technical issues that needed to be solved before the project could be permitted. We began with a half day charette at the city which over 30 staff attended. The Steering Committee brought a great lunch and by the end of the meeting the issues and the responsible parties to solve them were identified. The City authorized \$60,000 to cover staff time and we began regular meetings. Almost a year passed with marginal progress but thanks to Gregg Waddell a Growing Vine Street Implementation Guide Book was published in March of 2000 which has served as a guide as individual projects on Vine Street are submitted for permit.

Landscape Architect, Barbara Oakrock was tremendous help during on the Steering Committee during the design, and contract document process. She became acquainted with the project through our advertisement for design consultants but felt she could contribute more and better accommodate her own schedule by serving as a professional on the Steering Committee rather than submitting on a design team.

Keeping the Project Alive and Keeping Our Focus

As GVS moved slowly along year by year, we stopped several times to focus energy on the core issues of the Belltown P-Patch. First the campaign to buy the cottage property to the south and the missing piece in the main patch. Next the effort to save all three cottages and develop the cottage park, and last the restoration of the cottages. There was some overlap in personnel on all of the projects, but mostly Growing Vine Street was the spine that connected this marvelous urban oasis into the community and to the waterfront. The P-Patch and the Cottage Park were the core project we were building out from so we made every effort to support and not distract from the necessary work to insure their proper funding and development. Myke Woodwell and Glenn MacGilvra carried most of the load on those two projects with varying degrees of support and encouragement from the rest of the community

Money was always needed and two stalwart members of the Steering Committee, Janis Ford and Sandi Hogbin who joined the project in 2000, were the workers. They attended every meeting, wrote grants, attended grant interviews, and helped with accounting and project administration. During this portion of the project we needed money and solutions to technical issues and there wasn't much energy left over for community outreach. Various people attended our meetings off and on, but the faithful support of these two along with Barbara Oakrock help the committee moving forward.

Funding

Tim Hatley with King County Councilman Larry Phillips office negotiated the first \$20,000 for Growing Vine Street in 1997 from Phillips discretionary fund. This gave us a start on the match needed to go after a Department of Neighborhood (DON) matching grant of \$42,000.

None of these projects would have happened at all without the DON matching grant program which director Jim Diers nurtured under the administration of three Seattle Mayors. I can count seven separate grants totally \$617,372. Most of this was required to be matched by additional grants, community fund raising or volunteer labor which could be valued at \$10 - \$12 per hour. If we include purchase of the parcels of land and private contributions, over \$3,000,000 has been invested in the P-Patch, Cottage Park and Growing Vine Street not including value for the thousands of hours of volunteer time. The Growing Vine Street portion alone represents an investment of over \$800,000 plus volunteer time.

These multiple grants from DON and other agencies required constant coordination and many grant extensions. Jim Diers gave us great encouragement and featured GVS in his presentations of his nationally recognized grant program across the United States.

Actually our first outside recognition came as a 1999 Waianae award presented at a governmental conference in San Diego and our nomination was probably a result of one of Jim Diers' presentations. This national recognition helped validate our project at the local level

A major milestone was a contribution in October 2001 of \$22,500 from the Committee of 33, a group of influential Seattle women. This contribution and endorsement of the project gave us a much needed financial boost and increased our credibility for gaining additional funding from the private sector. King County's WaterWorks grant program closed the gap with a \$50,000 and a \$5,000 grant to put us over the top for construction of the Cistern Steps. Our fund raising needs right now amount to around \$20,000 to provide a few of the artistic features outside of the construction contract. This includes tile inserts on the stair risers and on the retaining walls and artist design handrails on the five short flights of stairs that connect the terraces.

The magic attraction of Growing Vine Street

This project really touches our basic inherent need to feel a connection to nature within the urban environment. An architectural student who attended a presentation

by the Growing Vine Street team at the University of Washington came to my office a few weeks later with a poem inspired by our project. I was extremely touched at his thoughtfulness and this proof that we were reaching people on a deep level. Following are a few excerpts.

Growing Vine Street

Michael Godfried

.....

The rain falls from the sky
seeking its way back
to the slapping
rolling

waters of the Bay

Only to be diverted
thwarted

the topology of the ground
no longer
provides a reciprocal
catch basin
of collection and dispersal

the cycle is seemingly broken

.....

There is a street in the city,
that seeks once again to connect
earth to sky

to keep the water

above ground

to trace the serpentine
running path
of water:

roof-top
gutter
cistern
back into the wetland swale
and

Splash!

into Elliot Bay below

artists' studios, gardens
and businesses
hug this concourse
where human activity flows
and mingles along the water's edge

Knitting a human experience

a vivacity of community
into the exposed fabric of nature
in the city.

A place to appreciate the jingles and rhythms,
of rain,
of moisture,
of human interaction,
within the wet Pacific Northwest.

a celebration of the elements

This portion of urban habitat that was supported mainly rats, starlings, pigeons and seagulls, now supports song birds, bees, butterflies, and gardeners.

Conclusion

My front row seat as both observer and participant in this adventure over the past 12 years has been an extraordinary experience. Reflecting back I am amazed at the number of participants and the accomplishment. The right people with the necessary skills and motivation turned up at the right moment. The environmental movement was at the point a project like this was possible and the delayed development in Belltown allowed us to catch a few opportunities before they were lost. The unique combination of artists, residents of all income levels, design professionals, developers, and community oriented local businesses brought broad based resources which were focused on the necessary steps.

As the project moved along at its own pace people left to finish school, changed businesses, or moved away. Many came back a year or two later and picked up where they left off. Some worked intensely on one project or event and we never saw them again. Others have been here the full 16 years. The project has a life of its own and people find their niche and pitch in where they can make a contribution and have fun. Hundreds of people have participated and contributing many thousands of hours. The spirit is contagious and more than one person has told me that they bought their condo nearby because of the sense of community that sustains these projects.

Growing Vine Street opened the way for flexibility in Green Street design. By introducing a radical design far outside of the standard development guidelines for city streets, we created an environment where it was safe for other proposals to come forward both from neighborhoods and city departments. When presenting our design concept we discovered that there was no process for permitting a comprehensive green street design, no way to pay for the development other

than on a parcel by parcel basis with new development and no system to handle maintenance. These hurdles have been met and the doors are now open. The time was right for progress on these issues. The public and the City were ready and Growing Vine Street became the project which helped open those doors.

Although the process of resolving technical issues and permitting seemed frustrating and arduous at the time, as I look back I see extraordinary support for this project within the city. Many times officials and especially the Department of Neighborhoods took big risks in supporting us. These two major demonstration projects, Beckoning Cistern and the Cistern Steps could never have happened without that support.

As the projects stands today, the nucleus of the P-Patch and Cottage Park is nearly completed and by the end of 2004 a second major Growing Vine Street Demonstration project, The Cistern Steps, will be constructed.

The Belltown name is official now since the Neighborhood Plan dropped the name Denny Regrade. Projects like the Belltown P-Patch, Cottage Park and Growing Vine Street are testament to the survival of the original Belltown spunk and sparkle and the stage is set for the full Growing Vine Street vision to unfold.

This narrative is my view as chair of the GVS steering committee and owner/developer/architect of the 81 Vine Building. Much went on before I joined the neighborhood and in the simultaneous Cottage Park project in which I was peripherally involved. Although not complete, I hope my story gives a sense of the energy of these combined projects which just could not be dampened no matter what the obstacles.