

HISTORY: HUNTER BOULEVARD CENTERSTRIP

"The Mount Baker Park, an addition with character" was platted in 1907. It was Seattle's first attempt to develop an exclusive ("character") community (REFER: Mount Baker Park history), and part of the plan was the inclusion of park areas scattered about the community - Mount Baker Park and Boulevard, Lake Washington Park and Parkway (Boulevard), Hunter Boulevard, etc. The layout of park areas and streets did relate to contours along the lake slope but on the level areas reverted to the standard rectangular grid system. The area had been logged of big timber some years before, so The Hunter Tract Improvement Co. immediately got busy by establishing the Mount Baker Improvement Club to "control" the development. Streets were graded and paved and sidewalks built, and the beach area developed (by the Park Department). Earlier realtors had promoted the "development" of their real estate holdings that were "out-of-town" by building a cable car or trolley line from town to their subdivision, terminating in a "trolley park" as a lure for Sunday outings.

By 1907 the day of private trolley lines had ended with their consolidation for financial reasons and the need to serve city-wide transportation. So in 1910 the agents for the Improvement Club requested a permit for the Seattle Electric Company to lay tracks for a trolley car through the subdivision along a route of the realtors' determination - including HUNTER BOULEVARD. (The boulevard is named by and for The Hunter Tract Improvement Co./identity of "Hunter" not known). A 1909 ordinance had established the Department's jurisdiction over a 40' wide center-strip between Hanford and Spokane Streets and the double roadway established, but the Department objected to the retention of that jurisdiction upon the laying of car tracks plus poles for the trolley wires through the middle of the park strip.

Then the Park Board tried to widen the centerstrip. The tracks were laid in the centerstrip, turning west on Spokane Street to turn again onto 37th avenue to continue south; northward the tracks were laid in Mount Baker Drive, turning west onto McClellan at Mount Baker Park, turning north onto 31st and on to downtown. Evidently, the remainder of the centerstrip was landscaped.

In 1947 the community complained about the "unsightly condition . . . (because) . . . the old street car tracks have been torn up leaving ugly holes in the strip of park property." After 1951 repairs to (all) boulevards were farmed out to the Engineering Department.

In 1963 the Park Board received a petition to widen the double lanes to accommodate increased traffic, including transit buses (which replaced the trolley cars); the Community Club opposed the petition. The result was the rounding of each end of the centerstrip. Meanwhile the initiator of the petition moved away and the new resident signed in opposition to the widening. Over the years the only other action has related to the knock down and replacement of the posts and the resultant driving or parking upon the centerstrip, and objections to the planting plans as being hazardous to children or drivers.