



January 12, 2017

**Letter of Support
Urban Homestead Foundation**

As the founding Principal of Genesee Hill Elementary, I am pleased to endorse this effort to purchase the land at the corner of Dakota and 50th Avenue SW in order to establish an active green space and urban gathering center that models, promotes and teaches green building and sustainable food systems through community and leadership development. This beautiful parcel sits directly across SW Dakota Street from the front of our school, and our north-facing classrooms look directly into it on three floors.

“The Dakota Homestead” will be developed into a vibrant corner of sustainable green practices and urban agriculture, providing a place to celebrate our natural resources through demonstration gardens, weekly classes and seasonal events. The space will also serve as a food hub and seed lending library, connecting neighbors with each other and local farmers. In addition, the land will provide a wild space for schools to use as curriculum enrichment in topics such as edible gardening, urban wildlife, seasonal cooking, crafting and home finances.

With a growing enrollment of 700 students in grades Kindergarten through fifth grade, Genesee Hill School is the largest neighborhood elementary school in Seattle Public Schools. We have reopened this school year in our new building, bringing with us the rich traditions of community and academic excellence which formed the core of our reputation at Schmitz Park Elementary three blocks away. At Schmitz Park, we had ample space to develop programs for school gardens and a close association with the native plants and ecosystem of Schmitz Park Preserve. Developing this space at the Dakota Homestead would enable us to carry on this work in a way that our new building provides little opportunity.

I am especially excited about the opportunity for students to develop a close association with a neighborhood project that will provide opportunities for students to learn and explore in a hands-on way outside of the school. Because of its immediate proximity, our classes will be able to use the Dakota Homestead site regularly. Science, gardening, and art projects will be able to be developed and left to grow and change over time without the demands to share space that come throughout the school day. The Dakota Homestead will become a conduit for students to grow their relationship with their neighborhood in a way that will long outlast students’ connection to their elementary school.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerrit Kischner".

Gerrit Kischner
Principal