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## ADVANCING COMMUNITY / SUPPORTED PROJECTS

# The Power of Persistence

by FLO LENTZ on Apr 30, 2015 • 10:00 am

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## Three Giant Steps forward for Historic Preservation



This Place Matters: Mukai Farm & Garden rally, Vashon © 2013 Rick Wallace, courtesy of Friends of Mukai

Just in time for Preservation Month 2015, 4Culture is excited to report significant progress on three high profile preservation efforts. All three are classic examples of small communities coming together to save places that are deeply meaningful to them, even if it takes years.

The Mukai Farm and Garden on Vashon was an immigrant success story, once the largest strawberry operation in King County in the decades before World War II. The house and its beautiful Japanese garden were purchased with public funds in 2000, but membership in the little nonprofit soon declined, and its leadership moved to Texas. Thirteen long years of inaction followed. Recently, a court ruled in favor of a newly elected board of islanders. If ever there was a "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens," it would be the Friends of Mukai, who'll soon inject new life into the project.

The Skykomish Hotel was built in 1904 – a sturdy railroad hotel in a study railroad town. The hotel fell into the hands of private owners who've waged a very public dispute with the community ever since. Meanwhile, the roof began to leak and the porches began to sag. Bright green mold grew like grass in the old wood-paneled lobby. After a 15-year stand-off, the property was seized, and sold at a recent Sherriff's sale. Now the Town of Skykomish, working with 4Culture and other partners, can begin the process of stabilization, readying it for sale to a preservation-minded buyer.

Fir Lodge, better known as the Alki Homestead, was completed as a private estate in 1904, when Alki was becoming a rustic beach retreat for the wealthy. Later it became the Homestead Restaurant, famous for its family-style fried chicken dinners. Ever since a fire broke in 2009, the old log building has been closed, deteriorating a little more each winter. A coalition of groups led by the Southwest Seattle Historical Society worked patiently with the owner to encourage restoration. In March, the property changed hands. The buyer plans to develop adjacent open space, but is committed to restoration of the



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Homestead as an integral part of the project.

Preservation groups and various local, county, and state agencies have supported these advocacy efforts, including: 4Culture, Forterra, Historic Seattle, King County Council, King County Office of Historic Preservation, WA State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, and the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.

"This Place Matters" is a trademark phrase for a campaign by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that began in 2008. The aim is to empower a network of people around the county to show their support for historic places that matter in their communities.

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