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Molbak's Garden + Home Forced Out of The Gardens District Development in Woodinville

(Woodinville, Wash.) Molbak's Garden + Home, a much-loved local landmark that has been part of the Woodinville community for 67 years, is being forced out of The Gardens District by Green Partners, LLC., the developer of the project. Green Partners is associated with Cascade Investment, LLC., the family office of Bill Gates.

A new Molbak's was supposed to be the centerpiece of The Gardens District, a "city in a garden" which would also include housing, retail, restaurants and other amenities. However, Green Partners recently informed Molbak's that it is no longer part of the project and the agreement to include Molbak's in the project is cancelled.

"We're shocked and devastated that Green Partners is cutting us out of The Gardens District," said Julie Kouhia, CEO of Molbak's. "We're still reeling from this news and considering a range of options as we work to better understand this sudden change."

Molbak's has been working closely with Green Partners since 2008 to co-create The Gardens District, a new development that will transform more than 19 acres of Woodinville into a one-of-a-kind community rooted in nature, sustainability and human connection.

During a Woodinville City Council meeting on June 20, 2023, a spokesperson for Green Partners expressed support for including Molbak's in The Gardens District saying, "It is

a pretty rare circumstance we find ourselves in, with such a storied business and a beloved business like Molbak's. We take great pride in what we have been able to put together with them and to create a project that integrates it for the next 65 years."

Woodinville officials were surprised by Green Partners' decision and strongly supported keeping Molbak's in The Gardens District. "Woodinville has been working hard to create a vibrant and walkable downtown with top tier development like The Gardens District. All while preserving and enhancing iconic Woodinville businesses like Molbak's," said Mike Millman, Mayor of Woodinville. "Molbak's is a long time, homegrown treasure that is deeply rooted in our community and draws visitors from all over the world. It's synonymous with Woodinville. This Molbak's-centric vision is why we are excited about this project and is why your Council approved the project in a 5-2 vote this past summer and this is still what the majority wants built now."

"As our downtown continues to evolve, we have been intentional about preserving the pieces that make Woodinville the unique and amazing community it is- and Molbak's is at the top of that list," said Brandon Buchanan, City Manager at City of Woodinville. "Its loss would be devastating to the community and we're committed to ensuring Molbak's remains a pillar of Woodinville for another 60 years and beyond."

Despite the unexpected move by Green Partners, Molbak's remains committed to the original vision of The Gardens District. "We remain passionate about The Gardens District and what it would mean for our company, our customers and our community," said Kouhia. "The project was our plan for the future of Molbak's and our opportunity to remain in Woodinville—the place where it all began for us and that we love dearly."

Molbak's is hopeful a deal can still be reached that would allow them to remain a key part of The Gardens District. "We don't really know the status of the project or what Green Partners is planning," explained Kouhia. "We'd love to continue to be the heart of The Gardens District and we've asked Green Partners to reconsider its decision and meet with us to find a way to make that happen."

The Gardens District is an affirmation of Molbak's commitment to Woodinville and the Northwest. Envisioned with both climate and community in mind, the project celebrates gardens, sustainability and responsible growth and is designed to encourage walking, biking and exploring the natural components of the property.

Egon and Laina Molbak arrived in rural Woodinville from Denmark in 1956, bringing with them a passion for gardening and a dream of creating their own business. More than six decades later, the family-owned business is the Northwest's premier garden and home destination.

"We have deep roots in the local community. We've been in Woodinville for 67 years—and hope to be here for another 67," said Kouhia. "Molbak's is more than just a store. We're a treasured tradition for many local families and have thousands of Northwest gardeners who love and rely on us."

For more information about Molbak's and The Gardens District, please visit molbaksnews.com

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