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Crosscut online magazine

February 20, 2008

Googie or Not, It's A Landmark

By Knute Berger

The Ballard Manning's/Denny's diner that has been a controversial candidate for historic protection was officially designated a city landmark by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board on Wednesday, Feb. 20, on a 6-3 vote. Oddly, it won out because the building, with a distinctive swoopy roof, is actually, well, a landmark in the old-fashioned sense. Much has been made about whether or not the building should be saved from the wrecking ball. The owners, Benaroya, and the developer, Rhapsody Partners, have been hoping to use the corner site at 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street for a mixed-use development with condos. Preservationists have argued that the diner was built by an important Bay Area modern architect, Clarence W. Mayhew (first reported here on Crosscut), and that it is an excellent example of 1960s Googie-style roadside architecture.

However, both claims took a beating at the designation hearing. Like a political candidate attacking an opponent's strengths, Benaroya and Rhapsody brought in consultants to dismantle the diner's claims to fame. A consultant from California, Judith Sobol, said, in essence, that she knew Googie, she grew up with Googie, her family went to Googie eateries, and the Ballard Denny's was not Googie. She said that the style generally emphasized space age and futuristic shapes (like the Space Needle) and that the Ballard structure was a mish-mash of historic styles. Architect and preservation consultant Larry Johnson, also working for the developers, got the laugh of the evening when he cited its various ethnic influences and described the diner as "Scandigooginesian." The message: It's an architectural outlier.

Another consultant, Tim Rood, an architect and guest lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley, took aim at the building's designer. His argument, in short, was that proponents of the diner were making a mountain out of a Mayhew. He said that none of Mayhew's other works have been landmarked, that he'd won only one major award, and that the Manning's was atypical of his noted works. He even claimed that Mayhew's proudest work, his own home, was designed by another architect.

The various claims by the hired guns were rebutted. Alan Michelson, a champion of the diner and head of the Architecture and Planning Library at the University of Washington, was seething at the claims. He had the

support of a number of authors and scholars who are expert of both Googie and Mayhew, including architecture critic Alan Hess, who has literally written the books on Googie. Hess' categorical judgment: "definitely Googie." Hess has written several letters supporting the building's landmark designation.

As it turned out, the landmarks board, while influenced somewhat by the negative presentations, decided that it really didn't matter in the end. They were more concerned with two other issues. One was the physical condition of the structure and whether or not it still had its architectural integrity. The interior of the diner was essentially gutted by Denny's in the early 1980s and the exterior has been altered and damaged by weather over the years. Based on physical condition, the staff of the city's preservation office submitted a recommendation that it not be designated a landmark.

But there was one criteria for being a landmark the board could not so easily dismiss or overlook. It is the sixth on a list of six, and it's called category "F." To be a landmark, a structure need only meet one of the six criteria. "F" reads as follows:

Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of sitting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.

What the board found undeniable is that almost everyone in Seattle has an opinion about the building — they said they'd received scores of letters and a letter asking them to save the building signed by 600 Ballardites. The controversy has also received extensive media coverage — the designation meeting was packed (standing room only) with many reporters and TV cameras in attendance. There are few people who don't know the building by its look and location. Indeed, for decades, people have used it to navigate the city, as in "if you're coming to Ballard, take a left at the funny old Denny's." Whether it's Googie or an agglomeration, whether it was built by a Mayhew or a nobody, it has become an indelible part of the cityscape with its most quirky attributes — especially that funny roof — intact. It's visually identifiable, distinctive, prominent in location, and very Ballard.

On that basis, they approved landmarking the exterior of the building. The interior has been too much changed; however, the reports on the physical condition note that it is restorable, with many of the original features, including a fabulous vaulted ceiling, still there. (The man who built that ceiling spoke to the board and called it "the greatest vaulted ceiling in Seattle"). However, the landmarks board cannot insist that an owner fix up or restore a building to its original condition. Benaroya has insisted that restoring the place is not in the cards.

Attorney John C. McCullough, working for Benaroya and Rhapsody, said that the landmarks ordinance cannot deprive the owner of their economic use of the site and they will appeal the decision on that basis, first in discussions with the city preservation staff, then if need be before a hearing examiner. They can also appeal directly to the City Council, which must put the designation into law. He says he feels certain they can make the case that preserving the diner will rob them of their ability to make a return on their investment. They paid \$12.5 million for the property, though the Manning's/Denny's building only takes up a portion of it.

The diner's proponents, however, have been working on Benaroya's problem and believe they have a scheme to save both the building and allow the developer to build their mixed use, condo high-rises on the site. Architect Ralph Allen of Grace Architects has come up with [an idea](#) [468K PDF] that could work by incorporating the structure into the new development and even play off its signature roofline — if the city will allow a rezone to let the developer build a taller building. That trade-off, Allen says, would be worth it: Ballard keeps its landmark and gets a high-density, mixed-use development on the gateway corner of the neighborhood. McCullough couldn't give his client's opinion on the matter, but he thought the proposal was unrealistic. So the Manning's/Denny's is saved for now — unless the owner can find a way to wriggle out on financial grounds. If not, it might be time for Benaroya to begin sketching out plan B.

Another open question is how the Manning's/Denny's landmark designation will be received by preservationists and developers alike. The designation of the diner had the support of groups like Historic Seattle, [Washington Trust for Historic Preservation](#), and [DoCoMoMo-WeWA](#). Nevertheless, there are some in the preservation community, like architect Johnson, who is on the board of Historic Seattle, who felt approving it would be a mistake. And attorney McCullough warned the landmarks board that saving the Denny's would "lower the bar" and "undermine the board's credibility." Already, people have expressed shocked at the idea of saving a Denny's

at all, and there continues to be upset over the city's recent decision to proactively seek landmark status for dozens of downtown structures. Could the diner become a poster child for over-reach, an attempt to save an architectural species ripe for ridicule?

On the other hand, for fans of modern architecture, it offers hope by giving recognition to 20th century building styles that are popular with the man and woman on the street and gaining recognition in academic circles, yet are still held in low esteem by traditional preservationists (who prefer saving mansions and monumental buildings) and by planners and developers who see them as impeding progress. However, the impulse to save this particular building is really much more simple, as expressed by the landmarks board's decision. Said diner preservation activist Michelson: "We won because the building really is a landmark."

Update: Larry Johnson, the architect and preservationist hired by Benaroya and Rhapsody to author their landmark nomination in the hope that it would be declined, has not read my story today (he says he doesn't read blogs) but he did offer the following opinion about the Landmarks board's decision via email:

"Ballard just bought themselves another Kalakala, unfortunately, this one won't be easy to tow to Tacoma. I see nothing but problems ahead. You can spin that anyway you want—as I'm sure you'll do. I remain a steadfast advocate for preservation—my bar just happens to be a bit higher than some. Preservation is about saving those things that are real—valuable things that our city, region, and or nation needs to retain in order to understand not only the past and where we've come from, but where we are going. I view the efforts to save a[n] ill conceived, poorly designed building in poor physical shape, designed by a second string California architect who had minimal understanding of our local climate, not preservation, but a lack of faith in the future. Perhaps, to some, this lack faith seems well deserved, but as an architect, I find this regrettable and disturbing."

Also, in surveying the press coverage of the designation meeting this morning, I highly recommend the [account by Peggy Sturdivant](#) at the "At Large in Ballard" blog on the P-I website. She really captures the mood and intensity of the meeting.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer Reader Blog
February 21, 2008
At large in Ballard with Peggy Sturdivant
The Ballard "Upset"- Manning's/Denny's

[This is a P-I Reader Blog not written or edited by the P-I. They are written by readers, for readers. The authors are solely responsible for content.]

You didn't really think I could resist attending the Landmark Board meeting concerning the former Manning's/Denny's site did you? In fact I was there when they first opened the doors to the public, and was riveted for the two and a half hours that focused on the Ballard site. It was an experience that even the morning after seems "unreal." More like a dream in which I was an extra in a big budget movie, because there was a lot of money in that room, and the cameras were rolling.

Ever since the "Googie" story, as it has been known, first broke in early January when the Seattle's landmark board decided to consider the former Manning's/Denny's landmark status I've suspected that story might put Ballard "on the map." Not necessarily in a good way. The very idea of landmarking a former Denny's seemed to draw the requisite amount of scorn and bile to make for a story that interested readers in Tacoma, Los Angeles...perhaps anywhere that a Denny's or Big Boy ever graced a roadside. We could ask why domestic violence or the increasing numbers from the homeless count weren't a greater priority, but they don't package as well as the story of one corner, one neighborhood on the verge of huge changes, one potential decision, "Googie" versus Goliath as Jenny Cunningham at KCTS coined it.

I've been writing about Ballard for almost two years now on this blog and I've lived in this neighborhood for twenty. If the lights were going to be on Ballard in a downtown setting, I was damn well going to be there. My account is long, but still not as long as the meeting since the Manning's discussion didn't start until 4:10 p.m. Read the account if you're interested in my opinion of what happened at a public meeting, because I found it drama of the highest order.

There were plenty of reporters in the room from the daily papers and television stations, Knute Berger from *Crosscut*, Jenny Cunningham from KCTS, Rebekah Schilperoort from the *Ballard News Tribune*, the Geeky Swedes from the My Ballard web site. I didn't have to cover the story - it was being covered. Yet I took six pages of notes. Why? Because it was drama, even though it seems like a tempest in a teapot. Some sort of battle lines have been established at this corner and at least yesterday it didn't matter whether it was symbolic of other things - reality exists in a gray zone in which change needs to happen. It is not fair to paint developers as the bad and concerned citizens as the good. But the terms were painted in black and white by the owners and potential developers, Benaroya and Rhapsody. The Landmark Board meeting on the 40th floor of the Seattle Municipal building brought over a hundred people into a room as though it was a court of law and a decision regarding the old versus new, good versus evil hung in the balance.

Clearly I haven't been getting out to the theater enough because I drank up the dramatic conflict as though I were parched. There were many players in the packed room for whom the drama will have real consequences in terms of what happens next. I got to watch the drama simply as a theatrical piece - a play in Three Acts. Before the play various theatergoers milled in the lobby. It seemed obvious who had expensive box seats versus cheap seats, except the analogy didn't hold once inside because Benaroya and Rhapsody people sat in the back, the Save Manning's group got some front seats and big name players in Seattle had "Standing Room Only" along with the rest of the general public.

Act One was a one hour presentation coordinated by smooth-faced lawyer John McCullough; the witnesses speaking against landmarking the site reeked of hired guns. In the movie "Stranger than Fiction" the main character has to determine if he's in a comedy or a tragedy by tallying what happens in the course of a day. I started tallying personal attacks. The first act strategy was to attack anything to do with the building, architect or city...Larry Johnson demeaned the process by proclaiming the architectural style could only be characterized as "Scandigooginesian." His argument was that the Space Needle is a landmark and the Denny's can't be compared to the Space Needle. The Berkeley expert Tim Rood proceeded to dismiss the architect as inferior, using something called the Avery Index which showed that compared to Frank Lloyd Wright, Clarence Mayhew is comparatively unknown. (Aren't we all?).

It occurred to me that a lot of effort and money was being applied to undermining anything at all (what would be next, people who liked pancakes?) and I started to feel defensive. Attacking a dead architect's reputation and "trying" him after death seemed harsh. Then the prosecution (who by the way are the group that actually nominated the site) called Judith Sobol, a Historian of Art and Architecture from Los Angeles. Her tones struck me as so lofty and superior regarding anything Los Angeles that I found myself feeling personally insulted and regretted that I had ever been foolish enough to live in San Diego (I was young and stupid). Her claim was that the Manning's design is in no way "Googie." (Knute Berger in an excellent account on Crosscut.com clearly heard the same tones - along the lines of "I knew Googie" and you sir are no "Googie.") She said those designs are boisterous and embrace the relationship of indoors and outdoors. Here in Seattle with our weather we would tend to be more "cloistered." She had a way of using words that made them sound like vulgarities. She dismissed the Ballard design as "rectilinear" several times in a way that emphasized "rectal." She also declared the design a "pastiche" and she made that sound like a vulgarity as well, finally uttering a final curse on Seattle, "This is not a "Googie" city."

Then the applicant's attorney made closing arguments in which he asked the Board to decline to designate the building as a landmark, opining that if they did so they would lose their credibility as a Board and thereby undermine all the good they have ever done in the past. He also threw in that their own survey showed that 60% of the respondents would not "spare" the building. I received that survey phone call and I think the questions were so misleading that I may also have agreed that I wouldn't spare my own mother if it would cost money to restore her to her 1964 condition.

Well, they were making me mad. Were they saying Ballardites were "rectal" and that it's so rainy and we're so insular that we couldn't have had a "Googie?" I never wanted a "Googie" before but how dare they take away our right to have one. Act II was the public comments from citizens who want the site preserved and a few comments from people who didn't think it met the criteria; Ken Alhadeff who restored the Majestic Bay, Arlen Collins of CollinsWoerman Architects and a young woman who like many had been lying on the floor.

Throughout all of the hours the nine member listened very politely. The highlights of the public comments were many but Charlie Jenner stole the show according to my program notes. He was original builder. He had been sitting three chairs away from me with his cane by his side. When his name was called he made his way slowly past chairs to where most speakers had stood. "That was the best job I ever got into," he started, then told about how Manning's had asked for someone they could trust to do the work. How he had to search for the unusual materials, "all the way up to Bellingham," and how when it was done, "What was created was the greatest vaulted ceiling in Seattle."

The staff member called "time" when his two minutes were up but he couldn't hear that. The Board chair Stephen Lee apologized for needing to stop him and when Mr. Jenner still couldn't hear appealed to someone to explain to him. Then Mr. Lee said, "so I'm assuming you support the designation." Charlie Jenner, "Of course I do!" Charlie Jenner held a hand up to his ear so someone on the floor yelled up, "do you want them to save the building?" Mr. Jenner bellowed in response, "Well of course I do!" It was the least scripted and sincere line in the event.

Another woman named Pandora said eloquently, "Mental maps constitute our sense of place." Christine Leander called upon the Board to make official what she said has been unofficial for years, the building is a Ballard landmark. Suddenly there were no more comments. The Board heard their staff's written opinion against designating the building. Then moving along the nine members, from left to right, they each discussed whether it met any of the six criteria. The first member Tom Veith seemed inclined but subsequent members expressed many reservations until at last Vernon Abelsen came out and said that he supported the designation. Four more members appeared to be on the fence and then it came around to the Chair Stephen Lee. He tipped his hand that he considered the Manning's/Denny's building to be a "bookend" to the other visual landmark of Ballard, the Golden Gardens Bathhouse. He felt there was sufficient integrity and found Mr. Jenner's comment about the vaulted ceiling "quite remarkable to me." Then I think he actually said the words, "I vote yes."

In short order there was a vote and all those "on the fence" people appeared to have just been watching one another to see which side of the fence others would be on. The vote was 6-3 and then there was an excited buzz and the Board stood up to stretch while the room cleared of all those in attendance for the Manning's portion, and they got back to business of reviewing plans.

Counsel John McCullough meets the press after the decision: Just outside the doors back in the lobby the theatergoers were animated, either expressing elation at the surprise ending or disbelief at the decision. The attorney gave an impromptu press conference, his face shining in the peculiar light of the big cameras. The two and a half hour drama within Room 4060 was over but it would be the beginning of others, an appeal no doubt based on an ordinance that protects an owner from being held to specifications that may cause too much economic hardship.

The "win" may be a short one for the building and Ballard as it will now stay boarded up and a graffiti target for a very, very long time as a legal battle proceeds. But on February 20th it made for glorious drama, free but for the price of the bus ticket downtown. A chance to watch an incredible cast of characters in performance; glorious because ultimately it was the unpaid extras who stole the show from the overpaid leads.

Seattle Times
February 22, 2008 -
Former Denny's owner to appeal landmark status
By Sanjay Bhatt

Benaroya Companies says it plans to appeal a decision by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board to declare the now boarded-up Ballard Denny's a landmark. The board's decision Wednesday to designate the 1964 structure a landmark against the advice of its own staff surprised Benaroya Companies, which bought the one-acre parcel in 2006 for \$12.5 million and planned to sell it to a condominium developer. The landmark designation also drew spirited public response. On The Seattle Times' Web site Thursday, most readers posting comments were incredulous, saying the structure did not merit landmark status. A few praised the board, saying the building represented Ballard before condos took it over.

Opened as Manning's Cafeteria in 1964 and converted to a Denny's in 1983, the building at the corner of Northwest Market Street and 15th Avenue Northwest is recognized for its distinct upswept roofline. But city staff members say the deteriorating structure lacks many of the original materials and finishes that defined its architectural character, a style that includes some features of what's known as Google architecture. Supporters of preserving the building said restoration was possible.

"Despite years of poor maintenance and bad alterations [such as the dropped ceiling], this building was and remains a solid piece of original, creative architecture," wrote architect Alan Hess, a critic for the San Jose Mercury News and author of a book on Google-style buildings. "The essential architectural characteristics of this Mannings remain, and can be restored."

At Wednesday's hearing, some board members also remarked about ways to return the building to its original style.

In January, members of the 11-member board which includes architects, historians, a structural engineer and a real-estate manager — overwhelmingly supported the nomination of the building for landmark status, the first step in a long process of preserving old buildings. But board staffers and Benaroya's attorney warned the board before Wednesday's designation vote that, under the city's preservation law, the board's decision must be based on the current physical appearance of the building — not on the possibility of restoration. "By voting to designate it, the board is allowing it to stay in its current condition," Louie Richmond, a spokesman for Benaroya Companies, said Thursday. "It can't be about emotion and about sentimentality. It has to be about the law. If you don't like the way the laws are drawn up, you need to change the laws."

Under the city's rules, once the board designates a landmark, the staff negotiates a "controls and incentives agreement" with the owner that stipulates what features must be preserved and whether the city can grant waivers to zoning or building codes to encourage preservation. If the owner declines to participate, the staff submits an agreement for approval to the board, and the board files this agreement with the city hearing examiner.

According to city code, the hearing examiner cannot impose the agreement on the property owner if the effect would be "to prevent the owner from realizing a reasonable return" on the property. John McCullough, the attorney representing Benaroya Companies, said it would not be difficult to show a hearing examiner that banning demolition would mean a financial loss for the owners. Though preservationists and some community residents are celebrating Wednesday's decision, it's still possible Benaroya could prevail on appeal.

In the mid-1970s, as developers were demolishing several area historic theaters, the city proposed landmark status for the Music Hall at Seventh Avenue and Olive. The owners, the Clise family, fought the proposal, but the theater was declared a landmark in 1977, according to Historylink.org. The family appealed to a hearing examiner and won. The family's plans to redevelop the property prompted a successful effort to redesignate the Music Hall a landmark. Again the family appealed and won, with a hearing examiner saying landmark status should not preclude a property owner's right to make a profit. The theater was demolished in 1991.

Author Lecture and Book Signing: *Seattle Architecture: A Walking Guide To Downtown*

Co-Sponsored by Seattle Architecture Foundation, University of Washington Press, and University Book Store

When: Thursday, March 20, 7:00 pm

Where: University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 98105

How Much: Free - No Registration Required.

"If you like architecture and you love Seattle, we have the book for you. Seattle Architecture is finally available, and it's fetchingly cool." -Seattle Post-Intelligencer. The long-awaited guidebook has been described as a model of accuracy and comprehensive coverage of downtown Seattle buildings and spaces. More than 400 images are featured in the full-color book. Seattle Architecture Foundation (SAF) worked with author Marueen Elenga and volunteers for more than two years to develop the book, the organization's first publication. It is the only Seattle guidebook that focuses entirely on downtown Seattle from I-5 to Elliott Bay, Seattle Center, and the southern boundaries of the International District and where it all began, Pioneer Square.

The book was made possible by extraordinary gifts. Maureen Elenga used the book as her UW Master's of Art History degree project, donating her services and the copyright to SAF. The book's design expenses were covered by donations to the Keith Pegorsch Memorial Fund. The book is dedicated to Pegorsch, an architect who loved to give downtown Seattle architecture tours. Most of the images were donated by Roger Williams FAIA and Dennis Haskell FAIA who took them for the book. The rest of the entry images were donated as well by architecture firms, building owners and other photographers. Gifts from the Nesholm Family Foundation, Sclater Partners Architects and SAF Emeritus Directors supported the book's production.

SAF published the book to connect residents to the design that shapes our lives and to inspire them to make good decisions about places and issues that will shape our city's future. Visitors, too, will get to know Seattle in an intimate way and, hopefully, be inspired to engage more in their own community design decisions.

The 295 page book is being distributed by University of Washington Press to bookstores, but is also available directly from SAF through the website <http://www.seattlearchitecture.org/> and by visiting the gallery on the third level of the Rainier Square Atrium at 1333 Fifth Avenue, or by calling the office at 206.667.9184.

Panel Discussion: Changing Face of Seattle's Neighborhoods

Friday, March 7, 2008 – 11:30 AM Registration/12:00 – 1:30 PM Luncheon
Washington Athletic Club, 1325 Sixth Avenue, Seattle
Register at <http://www.seattlecityclub.org>

Admission: \$45

Panelists:

Jim Diers, Author, Neighbor Power

Ada Healey, Vice President of Real Estate, Vulcan Inc.

Diane Sigamura, Director, Department of Planning & Development

Jim Vesley, Editorial Page Editor, The Seattle Times (Moderator)

Unprecedented development is reshaping Seattle's neighborhoods unlike any other time in the city's recent history. From Ballard to Capitol Hill and South Lake Union, neighborhoods are adapting to a new, denser urban reality. What do these developments say about the future of Seattle and how we define vibrant, livable urban neighborhoods? How do we preserve a neighborhood's character and charm while making room for new buildings that help accommodate undeniable growth? How can the public and private sectors work together to shape growth in a way that supports a diversity of housing, complements the existing community and respects the environment?

From Seattle City Councilmember Sally Clark: Neighborhood Planning Forum

As many of you know, I've been working on the review of Seattle's neighborhood plans for almost a year now. We've found that while some neighborhoods are on pace with their neighborhood plan goals, others are changing far more quickly or slowly than anticipated. As we prepare to make updates to the 38 neighborhood plans created nearly 10 years ago, we are faced with an extraordinary opportunity to ensure that the next ten years successfully meet community needs.

It is important that we enter into this process with a dedication to participation and faith in the process. For this reason I am partnering with former Mayor Norm Rice and the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington to host a forum about the future of our neighborhood plans. Should we update them? How would we know whether a plan needs refreshing? If we do update the plans, what should be our goals for the process and the product?

The forum will happen Saturday, March 1, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the University of Washington campus. This event seeks to bring together a great diversity of voices and opinions for discussion of what makes great community planning. We've invited district council representatives, members of community councils and small chambers, and interested voices from groups that haven't been connected to planning previously.

I want to make sure that we move forward smartly -- learning from our past and adding in great ideas as yet untapped. If you are interested in participating in the forum, please email a note of interest to Outreach Coordinator Chris Godwin crgoodwin23@gmail.com. Chris will follow up with you soon after. Please know that space is limited and not all who want to will be able to attend. If you can't make it, have no fear. The Evans School team will compile a report from the event and that will be available in April on my website.

My priority is to ensure that any neighborhood plan updates are truly community driven that we carry through the commitment to grassroots, democratic planning that was integral to the success of planning 10 years ago. I'm looking forward to it!

Award Nominations Sought for Preservation Strategies to Enhance Economic Development

The Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce recently announced the EDA Excellence in Economic Development Awards 2008 to recognize exemplary economic development accomplishments in your communities.

In particular, EDA announced the new nomination category of Excellence in Historic Preservation-led Strategies to Enhance Economic Development. Nominations submitted in this category would demonstrate significant use of regional historic assets (including heritage tourism) to advance innovative economic development strategies resulting in higher-skill, higher-wage jobs and substantial private capital investment. EDA is accepting nominations through April 16, 2008.

If you have any questions please contact Barbara Earman in EDA's Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Division at 202-482-4521. The Awards 2008 nomination brochure is available for you to review and download on <http://www.eda.gov/PDF/EDAawardsbrochure2008.pdf>. Eligibility and evaluation criteria are discussed in the brochure.

Where's the oldest house in the Greenwood-Phinney neighborhood?

The Greenwood-Phinney Historical Society would like the answer to that question and invites neighborhood residents to help find it. Perhaps we still have a few houses that were built before 1900? Hint: if you find a construction date of 1900 in King County Tax Records keep digging! The house might actually be older than that. Building permits will give you a more accurate construction date.

When you've found your candidate, take a photograph of it and photocopy your documents identifying the construction date of the house. Winning entry will be determined by oldest construction or building permit date of all entries received. Entries must be received by April 30, 2008. Send your photo(s) and documents to:

GPHS Oldest House Contest
c/o Phinney Neighborhood Center
6532 Phinney Ave. N
Seattle, WA 98103

Winner receives a copy of "Seattle's Greenwood-Phinney Neighborhood" signed by author Ted Pedersen and breakfast for two at Mae's Phinney Ridge Café. Houses must be within the Phinney-Greenwood neighborhood (50th to 105th Streets, Aurora to 8th Avenue NW) but contest entrants need not live within the neighborhood. More than one entry per person is acceptable. Please include your name and contact information so that we may contact you if you are the winner!

City Council review of Seattle Center Master Plan

The Seattle City Council Committee of the Whole will be meeting on Monday, February 25, 2008 to discuss Seattle Center Master Plan. The agenda is available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/council/agendasc/parks.htm>. It includes a review of preliminary draft alternatives, market studies and business case analysis of draft alternatives. Presenters will be Robert Nellams, Director; Jill Crary, Redevelopment Director; Kerry Smith, Seattle Center; Bill Rhoda, Principal, CSL International; Christa Valles, Council Central Staff

Tacoma Landmark Nomination

The City of Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission will meet on February 27, 2008 to conduct a public hearing for the landmark nomination of the Olympic Garage, 1222 Tacoma Avenue S. The agenda is available online at: <http://tacomaculture.org/historic/resources.asp>

WSDOT 2008 budget includes Aurora Bridge suicide barrier

Page 3 of the Washington Department of Transportation 2008 budget specifies an allocation as follows:

Suicide prevention fence on the Aurora Avenue Bridge. The Aurora Avenue Bridge has the second highest suicide rate in the nation, behind the Golden Gate Bridge. Installation of an 8-foot suicide prevention fence with illumination will help make the bridge safer and can help prevent suicides. The \$7.5 million project will be completed in the 2009–11 biennium.

View the entire budget at: http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap/budget/detail/2008/ht2008Highlights_0220.pdf

Daily Journal of Commerce

February 20, 2008

Friday Harbor named ‘distinctive destination’

The National Trust for Historic Preservation named Friday Harbor one of its 2008 Dozen Distinctive Destinations. The selected destinations “boast a richness of character and exude an authentic sense of place.”

Though only one square mile in size, Friday Harbor has close to 150 historic buildings reflecting the community’s civic, commercial and residential history. Friday Harbor is one of Washington’s few seaport villages to survive the turn-of-the-century fires that engulfed early Seattle and other cities.

“With its distinctive Pacific Northwest heritage and seaside activity, Friday Harbor is an inviting destination no matter what you look for in a vacation,” said Richard Moe, president of the national trust. “In the face of ever-increasing tourism pressure, it has successfully preserved its historic fabric and safeguarded its natural environment to retain its authentic sense of place.”

Daily Journal of Commerce

February 20, 2008

AIA offers a tour of Colman School

AIA Seattle will host a tour of the Northwest African American Museum built in the historic Colman School. Designers from Architect DKA will lead the tours. Two tours will be held Wednesday, Feb. 27, one from 1:30 to 3 p.m. and the other from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 233 S. Massachusetts Street, in advance of the museum’s grand opening March 8.

The museum will document the experiences of African Americans in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. For more information, go to aiaseattle.org or call (206) 448-4938.

Building tenants pay between \$17 and \$21 now. Chappron, the gem appraiser who leases 660 square feet on the 10th floor, said tenants such as him, who require little space and can't afford high rents, are having trouble finding anything comparable close by. David and Evelyn Ghan have operated a watch-repair business on the 10th floor for 48 years. David said he once repaired a watch for Joshua Green and has a thank-you letter on his wall from the patriarch.

The Ghans, who said they have a "verbal lease," said they were notified two weeks ago that they must vacate by late August. "I can understand that they're doing what they have to do from a business perspective," Evelyn Ghan said, "but after all these years, this came as a complete shock ... most of us are pretty unhappy." The company notified tenants last September that it was considering renovating, McCammon said.

So far about one-third of the building's 45 tenants have received notices to vacate, he said. The Green Corp. is offering relocation assistance, including introductions to brokers and other landlords and, in some cases, help with moving expenses, he said. Some tenants will relocate temporarily to parts of the building not affected by construction, McCammon added. He wouldn't say how much the project is expected to cost.

The Stranger
February 21, 2008
Southern Strategy: Columbia City Grows Up
by Erica C. Barnett

Major changes are coming to Columbia City. In addition to a controversial development to house the chronically homeless, developers' plans call for hundreds of new market-rate residential units, new affordable condos, and apartments. Solid estimates of how many new residents these developments will bring to the community are hard to come by, but a conservative guess puts the number near 1,000—a potential population increase of as much as 17 percent for a neighborhood that, as of the 2000 census, is home to fewer than 6,000.

On February 15, the city's Landmarks Preservation Board met to discuss the latest major project in the neighborhood—a new mixed-use development at Columbia Plaza, currently the site of a sea of parking spaces and a small shopping mall that backs up onto a park that's a crime hot spot for the area. Because the lot sits in the historic district, any new development there must go through landmark review—which means, among other things, that it must maintain the "self-contained, small-town quality" of downtown Columbia City and be a size "consistent with the massing of existing historic buildings."

That last requirement is where the project could run into problems. The massing (size and shape, rather than design) plans presented by Dana Behar of HAL Real Estate Investments and Ed Weinstein of architecture firm Weinstein AU at last week's landmarks board meeting showed one or more six-story residential buildings with retail on the ground level facing Rainier Avenue and Edmonds Street—a smaller street that runs perpendicular to Rainier down to the planned light rail station at Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.

Residents of the neighborhood have expressed alarm at the scale of the projects planned for the area, including another proposal at the other end of the historic district, by developer Harbor Properties, to redevelop an old plastics warehouse into a 375-unit condo complex six stories high. "The neighborhood does hope and pray that you'll build to a 40-foot height limit," [usually four stories] resident Chris Osborne said.

Meanwhile, another project a few blocks south in Hillman City—60 units of housing for Downtown Emergency Service Center clients who are chronically homeless, meaning continually homeless for more than a year—is already well underway, with a giant hole in the ground where a vacant lot used to be. The apartments, which will be monitored by DESC staff 24 hours a day, have been controversial among neighborhood residents, who worry about the impact of more low-income services on the vulnerable south end of the neighborhood. "Now that it's happening, the question is how to make it work," says Mikala Woodward, director of the Rainier Valley Historical Society. "It definitely feels like in the best case, it's not harmful."

The teams associated with the first two projects have a history of making developments fit in with the neighborhoods where they're located. For example, Weinstein AU designed the Agnes Lofts at 12th Avenue and East Pike Street, the award-winning downtown Banner Building, and many other developments around the city.

As Weinstein told the landmarks board, "We're looking to do authentic buildings that are appropriate only for their sites and their circumstances." That ought to be exciting news for Columbia City residents—not cause for chagrin.

Capitol Hill Times

February 21, 2008

Change is under way at Odd Fellows

By Doug Schwartz

The building is 100 years old, with creaky stairs and an ambiance that speaks of another era. Home to numerous large and small arts organizations - including mainstays Velocity Dance, Freehold Theatre and the Century Ballroom - the Odd Fellows Hall's future use as a multi-faceted arts space is in dramatic flux. That 2008 will be a year of change at Odd Fellows is evident on the web pages for some of Odd Fellows, and the city's, most venerable arts groups. As an example, Freehold Theater's February newsletter, which announces that Freehold will move from Oddfellows at the end of March after 16 years, tells what feels like an inevitable story.

"We are currently in the process of signing a lease at a new space and will be announcing the location very soon once the logistics are finalized," reads the text. A notice at the homepage of Velocity Dance describes a similar fate: "We are currently negotiating to stay at this location for as long as we can while we look for a permanent home where Velocity can have more control over its destiny," announces the Velocity Web site.

An announcement released last week declared that Velocity will remain at Odd Fellows through July before relocating to a temporary and as yet unsecured location. The stated goal is to make the Washington Performance Hill, at 14th Avenue and Fir Street, Velocity's permanent home in about three years. The space housed On the Boards before that organization moved to lower Queen Anne a decade ago.

At the Century Ballroom, where a 2,000 square-foot dance floor is perhaps the building's most striking interior space, owner Hallie Kuperman is guardedly optimistic that she will be able to remain in Odd Fellows. Her lease comes up in April 2009, meaning relocation, should it come to that, isn't looming for her the way it is for other arts organizations in the building. She recently submitted a proposal to the new owner that included a 200 percent increase in her rent and is anxious to hear back.

"I hope that I'm close enough to what they need to make it pencil out," she said. While she can raise prices slightly - it costs \$5 to attend a dance - Kuperman said that doubling or tripling the price of admission would drastically reduce the number of people who regularly appear on the dance floor. People might attend once a month or even slightly more, but the Century Ballroom thrives because many people go to dances several times a week.

She is pragmatic about what is taking place at the Odd Fellows Hall. "This building was for sale, and it would have been bought by someone at market rate. We all get that," she said. "But I hope that what ends up happening is that the situation at Odd Fellows brings the issue of arts spaces to the forefront."

Ted Schroth, who leads the group that purchased the Odd Fellows Hall, said that his plans for the building are still evolving. "There isn't a great deal of detail I can add at this point. Some tenants have moved out or will soon, especially on the fourth floor, and we're still talking with other tenants about leases," he said. Schroth said that his intention of updating the first and fourth floors are moving forward, but he did not elaborate as to what kinds of tenants he would be looking for in the future. "We're talking to existing and prospective tenants, but no agreements have been extended," he said. "We're planning our upgrades and intend to start construction on May 1. And we are talking with existing tenants about staying."

He acknowledged large numbers of people are concerned and even disappointed in the prospective loss of long-standing and well-regarded arts groups from the building. But, he said, the fact that he paid a market-rate price when he purchased the building dictates that he charge market rate rents to the tenants who occupy it. Schroth also acknowledged receiving the Kuperman's proposal for the Century Ballroom but declined to comment on its specific merits or lack thereof. "I know some people don't like what's going on here. I've been told I should operate the building at a loss for the sake of the arts community. I like the arts, but I am simply not able to

subsidize them," he said. "I don't want to use a heavy hand, and we're trying to come up with favorable terms with Freehold and Velocity while they find alternative spaces."

Schroth attended the arts forum held at the Capitol Hill Arts Center last month and said he found the discussion interesting. He said the prospect of the city taking a more active roll in preserving arts spaces has merit. But it was, he felt, a largely rhetorical conversation that probably has very little bearing on the particulars of his purchase of the Odd Fellows Hall.

"People are heartbroken over this. The Odd Fellows Hall is like hallowed ground," said Ann Donovan, a former board member at Velocity Dance. As a reaction to the sale and the changes that are set to take place at the Odd Fellows Hall, Donovan established the Save Odd Fellows Hall group in an effort to try and preserve the building as an arts space, at least in some form. The group's ultimate goal might appear to be a lofty one: trying to raise enough money to buy the building back.

"Some community members have the resources available, so a sale isn't out of the question," she said. "But Ted would need to want to sell, and he hasn't indicated that he wants to." With that in mind, Donovan is also working on generating city policies that would be more conducive to maintaining established arts spaces. That topic was front and center at the arts forum in January. People agreed that having the city establish legal tools which might have prevented the Odd Fellows situation was a laudable goal.

"Our issue isn't with Ted. The building was for sale last fall and the opportunity was there for someone. But the city has to ask why there weren't policies in place earlier to help keep Odd Fellows as an arts space. It's certainly cheaper and easier to maintain existing arts spaces rather than trying to establish new ones," she said. Donovan said that she thinks Schroth sees himself as well intentioned but questioned whether he has an appreciation for the cultural resource Odd Fellows Hall has become over the years. She said there have been e-mail exchanges with Schroth but no direct dialogue. (Schroth said he called Donovan and that the call was not returned.)

Donovan said she was optimistic that other options for Odd Fellows Hall remained possibilities: "I actually don't think all is lost. It's a matter of crunching a lot of numbers, and there are ways to make it so Ted might want to implement a plan that preserves the artistic nature of the building." Information about saving Odd Fellows Hall can be found at www.savetheoddfellowshall.org.

North Seattle Herald-Outlook

February 20, 2008

Building a safer bridge -- Aurora Bridge's suicide prevention barrier taking shape

By Josh Sabrowsky

For just a few hours on Feb. 13, a group of experts and neighbors meeting in Fremont were able to think creatively instead of solemnly, as they conceptualized ways of preventing suicides on the Aurora Bridge. As efforts and ideas for the Aurora Bridge Suicide Prevention Fence project continue to gain momentum, architects, engineers and concerned residents collaborated last Wednesday for a threehour design meeting at B.F. Day School. The result was a handful of new ideas for suicide prevention along the historic George Washington Memorial Bridge, which spans Queen Anne hill to the south and Fremont to the north along historic State route 99. In 2006, the state Department of Transportation (WSDOT) began taking steps toward suicide prevention along the bridge by installing a half dozen 24-hour hotline phones.

Last year, WSDOT estimated costs for the project from between \$4.3 million upwards of \$7.5 million, if the project includes new lighting-and if it continues to make progress toward construction of a prevention barrier in 2009. According to WSDOT statistics, more than 230 people have jumped from the bridge since it was constructed in 1931. A record nine people jumped to their deaths in 2006, matching the previous high recorded in 1972, while six ended their lives there just last year.

Nationally, the 155-foot-high bridge ranks second to the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco in suicide rates. Six small groups produced concept barriers before the doors opened to the public Wednesday for community dialogue-each group offering a unique solution to the bridge's storied suicide crisis. WSDOT asked design groups to carefully integrate creativity, structural integrity and the bridge's existing plot into their plans. The

bridge-recognized as a National Historic Landmark-cannot be modified in designs, and the barrier itself is not allowed to exceed 10 feet in height.

"We are lucky to have talented design professionals in Seattle volunteering their time to work on conceptual designs," said Seattle City council member Jan Drago in a press release addressing prevention plans. Drago serves as the chair of the council's transportation committee. Community members huddled in front of each design individually, picking it apart and offering their formed concerns.

"An Artistic View," the third design, fielded criticism for having artwork embedded into horizontal restraint wires, with concerns of it affecting motorists on the bridge. To its right, "Minimalist Approach with a Zap" found red pen marks for its electrically charged wires, thought to discourage jumpers from attempting to climb the barrier. "The trick is to balance the functional criteria of the assignment with its design," said David Clinkston, a local architect, who worked on the Tacoma Link light-rail project. His plan, "Glass Canopy," received plenty of attention for its use of aerial laminate glass above the sidewalk and vertical wires. "[Laminate] glass is such a great material for public transportation projects because it's very durable and easy to replace," Clinkston said. "Really, the only downside is in having to clean up after the pigeons."

WSDOT estimates on its Web site that every three months, a suicide is attempted from the Aurora Bridge, with more than half of jumpers falling on the land rather than water. More than 50 suicides have occurred since 1995. Originally, WSDOT considered installing netting underneath the bridge, but passed on the idea because of high project costs. They even thought of closing off bicycle and pedestrian access altogether on Photo by Bradley Enghaus the bridge, but decided such a move would be in direct conflict with existing WSDOT and city policies.

The project is not yet fully funded, though Gov. Christine Gregoire in December of last year earmarked \$1.4 million for it in her 2008 supplemental budget proposal. In a previous budget document, Gregoire acknowledged that WSDOT's project realistically could affect the number of suicide attempts on the bridge. "[The] installation of an 8-foot suicide-prevention fence with illumination on the Aurora Avenue Bridge will help make the bridge safer and can help prevent suicides," the document read.

According to WSDOT, the goal is to construct a barrier that improves public safety, noting in their project literature that physical barriers could eliminate suicide attempts entirely. With approximately 1,000 people working underneath the 3,000-foot-long span, the concern is not only for those attempting suicide but also those working nearby. "We want to create something that is relatively easy to construct and maintain, but is near 100-percent effective," said John Novak, another volunteer architect whose "Blades of Grass" concept utilizes stainless steel bars at staggered heights to echo the rolling mountains in each direction.

Novak's group also considered engraving the bars with subtle, life-affirming messages to sway those considering suicide away from the act. "[The design] must preserve the view from the bridge and keep it from feeling like you're in jail," Novak said. At this point in the process WSDOT, along with the city, will consider each design before filing a report to the state Legislature next month. Construction on the Aurora Bridge Suicide Prevention Fence project is slated to begin in 2009. For more information visit www.wsdot.wa.gov or www.aurorabridgefence.com.

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