

## Advocacy Update December 28, 2007

Previous issues of the Advocacy Update available at: <http://historicseattle.org/inthenews.aspx>

### In This Issue

- Seattle Post-Intelligencer: **On Architecture: AIA slams Seattle, but we pretty much deserve it**
- Seattle Times: **Best of Times: Michael Herschensohn**
- **Historic Tacoma Priorities for 2008**
- **Upcoming Seattle landmark nominations and designation**
- Ballard News-Tribune: **Ballard condo design criticized**
- Daily Journal of Commerce: **Amazon moving to South Lake Union**
- Seattle Post-Intelligencer: **New, old look for courthouse**
- Seattle Times: **Snohomish Museum collection may find a home**

---

### Seattle Post-Intelligencer

**On Architecture: AIA slams Seattle, but we pretty much deserve it**

**December 24, 2007**

**By Lawrence W. Cheek**

Last month, an out-of-town jury spent a whirlwind weekend reviewing new Seattle buildings for the local American Institute of Architects' annual honor awards. They delivered some sobering judgments: "For a city with such strengths -- education, culture, natural environment, wealth -- the jury hoped to see more evidence of leadership and risk, and less comfort with an already well-digested regional design language. Great architecture occurs when a great designer creates new opportunity."

Well, first, consider the source: one of the three jurors was Joshua Prince-Ramus, who in concert with Rem Koolhaas co-designed our dysfunctional Central Library. It certainly bristles with leadership and risk, but the more we use the building, the more obvious its deficiencies and perversities become. But if you take your own year's-end tour of new buildings in Seattle and its environs, it's hard to argue with the jurors' harsh assessment. While some good and interesting buildings are rising, one comes away with the feeling that architects are indeed failing to risk and lead.

It's not that we need innovation for entertainment or notoriety -- we have the library and EMP for that -- but for the sake of solving real problems, such as unaffordable housing. And for shaping the city's identity in a distinctive and environmentally appropriate way, so we don't just look like a watery Dallas. Let's take a survey of what architects -- locals and outsiders -- have wrought in the past year: Downtown Bellevue growing new high-rises like bamboo on steroids perfectly illustrates the regional architectural doldrums. Every example in Bellevue's new crop, whether just completed or in progress, seems to have rolled out of the same skyscraper factory: a sleek glass-and-steel skin, a flat top and a rustle of slightly off-square angles or nips and tucks to create a little tension with the street grid.

They're all vastly better than the concrete file cabinets of the '60s and '70s (Bellevue's Paccar Building and Seattle's Safeco Plaza, for example), but not as good as the best of the art deco age (Seattle Tower). Their greatest failing, however, is that they don't establish any meaningful identity for their city -- they don't signal anything except a generic prosperity. Cynics might say that's all Bellevue itself is about. You didn't read it here first. Mosler Lofts, the newest of the Belltown condo crop, points in a more engaging direction. In fact, it's the most interesting and provocative residential high-rise to appear in Seattle since World War II.

The architecture firm Mithun appears to have taken the feel of the original urban loft idea -- the gritty old warehouse transformed into high-end living quarters -- and applied it to a new building with the advantage of big windows, which are structurally impossible in most renovations. Its mood, as seen from the street, is dark, tough and industrial. But on the north side, it meets Clay Street with a three-story brick facade that could almost be a cluster of family-friendly row houses.

Urban life is all about ambiguity and complexity, and this building reflects it better than any of the slicker, more overtly luxurious towers around it.

The Heathman Hotel, which just opened in downtown Kirkland, is the year's silliest example of haute-bourgeois retroecture. The justification for this vaguely Italianate Victorian villa, executed by Jensen/Fey Architecture & Planning of Redmond, was to be "consistent with the city's elegant and historic buildings." But Kirkland's scattered Victoriana isn't nearly as compelling a context as its stock of late 20th-century architecture downtown and along the lakefront. That would have been worthwhile to build on.

Architectural nostalgia is essentially a developer-driven marketing ploy, a way to drape the overwhelming complexity of contemporary life in costumes suggesting 19th-century family values and small-town simplicity. It doesn't do any great aesthetic harm, but it suggests a retreat from the realities of the 21st century, a kind of denial. A new Interstate 405 pedestrian bridge, of all things, shows a good try at humanizing the most inhumane urban environment of modern times -- the freeway.

The three-story stair and elevator tower, just south of the state Route 527 exit in Bothell, is topped with an airfoil-like rain shield that gives it an intriguing profile whether approaching by car or on foot. The concrete pylons raising the bridge over the freeway look like art deco flower abstractions: tough, but graceful, too. The long tunnel-in-the-air over the freeway is as drab as an alley on the inside, but with eight lanes of traffic roaring underneath, it doesn't seem like a place where anyone would be tempted to linger.

The Olympic Sculpture Park by Weiss/Manfredi of New York is easily the best new public venue of the year, a park that redeems a former downtown wasteland with a synergy of art, architecture and nature. The architects took a big risk here, and pulled it off. The Seattle Art Museum's other blockbuster, the 16-story museum addition, demonstrates innovative leadership in sharing the new tower with WaMu, but Brad Cloepfil's design is as risk-free as a Brooks Brothers overcoat.

The thorniest issue that developers and architects face is the widening chasm between income and housing affordability in the region. Dreary \$500,000 tract houses in the 'burbs are yesterday's solution, just bulked up and priced ever more out of line with value. And the mid- and high-rise condos mainly address the needs of singles with Microsoft paychecks, with a going rate of about \$650,000 for 1,000 square feet.

Finally, considered as a piece of kinetic architecture, the South Lake Union Streetcar adds a new note of cachet to the downtown streetscape. The tracks are unobtrusive (except to bicyclists), and the Czech-made cars have an impassive, dignified look (aside from the one with the purple paint) that helps calm the nagging feeling that they're not really doing anything. It's probably worth asking why downtown Seattle now has two toy train sets, and why the one we unwrapped under the 1962 tree is so much faster than the new one.

\*\*\*

**Seattle Times**  
**December 23, 2007**  
**Best of Times: Michael Herschensohn**

The men, women and institutions that have made this region a better place in which to live is the basis for the *Seattle Times* Editorial staff's annual "Best of" recognitions. A strong economy, a vibrant city and a growing metropolitan city-state on the shores of Puget Sound provided us with lots of choices this year. Among the many, we chose these representative groups and individuals who have contributed to the way we live. One of those selected is a member of Historic Seattle's governing Council: Michael Herschensohn

Michael Herschensohn was recruited in 1998 to help a foundering Northwest Folklife Festival survive. He rallied the talents, energy and generosity of the festival board and the arts community in a united effort to save a cherished spring event. As he steps down, the festival faces new challenges and opportunities, but it is here to embrace them.

Read about the others selected at: <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/cgi-bin/taxis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=bestof23&date=20071223&query=best+of+puget+sound>

\*\*\*

### **Historic Tacoma Priorities for 2008**

The following priorities were established at the September Board retreat:

- Expand and stabilize the Board of Directors - We're currently recruiting for a treasurer, preservation professional, local developer, and an attorney. And we're looking for representation from the Hilltop, east, south and west sides.
- Focus Board work on strategic planning and policy - We're currently recruiting committee members to focus on operations, public programming, membership development, fund development, and marketing/communications.
- Retain supporters and members - Through delivering quality educational programming and advocating for public policies supportive of preservation, conservation of sustainable resources and an enhanced built environment.
- Establish liaison relationships with neighborhood councils, business districts, non-profit and public agencies.
- Put systems in place to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Clarify organizational identity in the community

Spotlight: Advocacy - The Strategy Team is working with City Council members, city and school district staff on a number of public policy issues. Our initiatives include improved procedures for surplussing of publicly-owned historic properties, a demolition review ordinance, and incentives to encourage the conservation of sustainable resources. We're also exploring a public development authority devoted to historic preservation.

But first up on our advocacy agenda is updating and expansion of the city's historic resource inventories. While sites on the Tacoma Landmarks Register are fully inventoried and protected, many structures of architectural, historic and cultural significance are not. If we don't know what we've got, we'll continue to lose buildings that contribute to Tacoma's unique built environment. We'd rather take a proactive approach: we want to see comprehensive neighborhood inventories (many have not been updated since the early 1980s), all inventories converted to database format, and data linked to the city's permitting & GIS systems. We've made some progress recently:

County funding for historic preservation: New court filing fees were established by the legislature in 2005 to support preservation of historic resources. Sponsorship by Councilman Tim Farrell and our efforts resulted in \$368K of the 3 year accumulation being devoted to historic resource surveys across the county. Ongoing funds, estimated at \$312K annually, will support additional staffing for the county's historic preservation office and a \$200K grant cycle for historic preservation work.

City funding for historic resource inventories: Tacoma City Council approved \$49K in the 2008 budget modification to enhance and expand the city's historic resource inventories, most of which date from 1979-81. With county funding, noted above, the city should make good progress on this in the coming year.

Welcome to new Board member Ken House- Ken works as an archivist for Weyerhaeuser Company. He's a member of the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission after 13 years of service on the City of Olympia Heritage and Thurston County Historical Commissions. Ken serves as secretary of the Commencement Bay Lodge of the Knights of Pythias and enjoys attempting to solve renovation problems at his home near UPS. He is interested in advocating for the preservation of historic buildings across Tacoma's social, ethnic and economic spectrum and in efforts that place local history in context through architecture.

Sharon Winters, Board President, Historic Tacoma  
[swinters@nventure.com](mailto:swinters@nventure.com)

\*\*\*

### **Upcoming Seattle landmark nominations and designation**

The agenda for the January 2, 2008 meeting of the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board will include consideration of a landmark designation of the Norton Building, 801 Second Avenue. It will also include reviews of the following landmark nominations:

Agincourt Apartments, 1823 Nagle Place  
Marianne Manor, 1825 Nagle Place  
Chevalier/Marynel Apartments, 118-124 Broadway Avenue E.  
Manning's/Denny's Building, 5501 15th Avenue NW  
Cassell Crag Apartments, 1218 Terry Avenue N.

The meeting will begin at 3:30 p.m. in room 4060 of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. You can view the nominations online at: [http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/landmarks\\_current\\_nom.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation/landmarks_current_nom.htm). These files are large and will take a short while to download them for viewing. Please send your comments in support of landmarking these historic buildings to: [Beth.Chave@Seattle.Gov](mailto:Beth.Chave@Seattle.Gov).

\*\*\*

**Ballard News-Tribune**  
**December 27, 2007**  
**Ballard condo design criticized**  
**By Rebekah Schilperoort**

Developers of a new eight story condo planned for a corner many consider the "gateway to Ballard" will have to do more to acknowledge the important intersection if they want the approval of the Northwest Design Review Board. The volunteer citizen board reviewed plans last week for Market Street Landing, a 226-unit condo above 31,000 square feet of retail proposed to replace the empty Denny's restaurant at 15th Avenue Northwest and Northwest Market Street.

Rhapsody Partners purchased the lot, which includes a strip of retail west of Denny's along Market, from the failed Seattle Monorail Project.

About 35 members of the public came to the review and several complained that the design presented by architects Freiheit and Ho was a "carbon copy" of other condos and didn't emphasize the location as one significant to the community. Elizabeta Stacishin-Moura, chair of the review board, said the design wasn't "distinct" and made no attempt to nail it as a "gateway corner." "It has a totally different identity than other buildings," said Stacishin-Moura. Board member Bill Singer said he didn't see how it related to other architecture in Ballard. "I don't see Ballard there at all," Singer said. He'd like to observe a rendering of the condo in the urban design context of other nearby developments like Hjarta, being built on the same block to the west.

Joe Giampietro, also on the board, said the design lacks character for a location that has been used as a navigational tool, the oddly shaped diner guiding the way into Ballard. "It's a challenge for anyone that approaches this site," he said. "I think we can acknowledge this is not an easy site." Denny's closed in September to make way for the condo. Beth Miller, executive director of the Ballard Chamber of Commerce, was disappointed with the residential look of the design for a corner that has been historically commercial. "I don't think it's as strong as it should be," Miller said. "It really needs to read more commercial."

The Denny's building will be considered for landmark status with Seattle's Landmark Preservation Board at a hearing on Jan. 2. Rhapsody nominated the building after information surfaced that a famous Bay Area architect, Clarence Mayhew, built it in 1964 as a Manning's Cafeteria. Often referred to as a long-time hangout for "old Ballard," the style of the building, with its curled A-frame roof, is a post World War II architecture style called "Googie." The future of the condo project may hinge on the landmark status of the diner because, according to Katie Vance, a partner with Rhapsody, it would be difficult to incorporate the building into any design.

Alan Michelson, head of the Architecture-Urban Planning Library at the University of Washington,

thinks Vance is wrong and believes it's worth saving. "The Denny's could be incorporated into a new and individualized design, one that preserves the restaurant as a gateway structure to downtown Ballard," said Michelson, who became familiar with Mayhew's work while doing his residency in the Bay Area. "I think the Denny's is an historic structure on multiple counts," he said at the design review meeting. "I think this whole project could benefit from its continued existence."

Michelson echoed the sentiments of several people that the design looked like many of the mixed-use developments going up around the city. "I think that it is a rushed design with no distinctive architectural character," he said. "It is monolithic and undistinguished." The condo would encompass one-half block, bordering 15th, Market and Northwest 56th Street. Split zoning on the site allows a four to eight-story structure along 56th and Market and four stories along 15th. Designed in an E-shape, it's supposed to look like three distinct buildings to lessen the impact of its height and mass, said Arthur Chang, a principal with Freiheit and Ho. But board members said it still felt "heavy."

Stacishin-Moura said it reminded her of a "sprawling octopus," and was bothered that no public gathering places had been included. "There's nothing that says, 'public, this might be a special place for you,'" she said. Rhapsody is still in negotiations with its anchor tenant, Rite Aide. The drugstore would operate a drive thru pharmacy accessed from Market Street. Chang said the company requires a certain building shape and has been driving not only the design of the building but the project itself. An earlier rendering caused some concern about the number of vehicle entrances on 56th. Chang presented a design that reduced the number of driveway entrances from four to three; two on 56th and one on Market. The primary resident entry would be on 56th.

Some residents of Ballard Place, the condominium north of the site on 56th, are worried that traffic there could become unmanageable with the added cars from Hjarta and the proposed condo. No on-site loading docks are included, so delivery and moving trucks would have to use street parking on 56th. Michelson said that would likely "exacerbate congestion" on the street. Traffic impacts will be studied under a mandatory environmental review before building permits are issued. Retail frontage and landscaping is now part of the design on 56th to address neighbors' concerns of a "blank wall" that could attract unwanted behavior.

An older style brick base is planned for the first two stories. The rest of the building materials are wood paneling and stucco. Framing around pedestrian entrances is meant to give it a "village" look, said Chang. The project would include planters with evergreen ground cover and new street trees along all bordering streets. The board asked Rhapsody to come back for another review. It recommended the brick base be brought up to three stories and asked that the sidewalk along 15th be widened to allow more landscaping and create a better buffer between cars and pedestrians. Vance said for a project of this size, it's not unusual to go before the design review board a few times before the development is approved.

\*\*\*

**Daily Journal of Commerce**  
**December 24, 2007**  
**Amazon moving to South Lake Union**

South Lake Union will be home to Amazon.com's new corporate headquarters, according to a news release from Amazon, Vulcan Inc., Schnitzer West and the city of Seattle. The headquarters will include up to 11 new buildings on six blocks along Terry and Boren avenues between Mercer and John streets, and could be as large as 1.6 million square feet. The online retailer expects to begin moving into the new space by the middle of 2010, with full occupancy in 2011. "We're very excited about our move to South Lake Union since it will enable us to serve our customers better by enhancing employee collaboration and productivity," Tim Halladay, vice president of real estate and finance operations at Amazon, said in the release.

Seattle Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis said Amazon will move 4,000 people to the development, with the potential for 3,000 more in the future. The company's headquarters is now on Beacon Hill. Vulcan and Schnitzer West are joint venture partners on the first phase, known as Interurban Exchange IV & V and Interurban Exchange II. Vulcan will develop the remaining buildings. Amazon spokeswoman Patty Smith declined to say how many employees will move to the new site because the firm doesn't do a location-by-location breakdown. She said the leases are for 14 and 16 years. Amazon signed the agreement to lease the space on Friday, according to a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The company in 2010 and 2011 will begin leases of up to 16 years. It will occupy 800,000 square feet for about \$700 million, which includes rent, operating expenses and tenant improvements.

The online retailer also has the right to occupy an additional 800,000 square feet for about \$800 million. Amazon would pay a termination fee of up to approximately \$40 million if doesn't take that space. Amazon also has options for additional space. Amazon currently has its headquarters in 190,000 square feet in the historic Amazon.com Building. Its lease there ends in 2010. It also leases about 180,000 square feet at Columbia Center, approximately 100,000 square feet on Rainier Avenue South, and about 400,000 square feet at the Union Station complex on South Jackson Street, according to real estate sources and OfficeSpace.com. It does not occupy all of the Union Station space it rents.

Smith said all employees in those building will move to the new headquarters. Distribution employees at other sites in the Puget Sound region will not move. Amazon said proximity to public transportation was a key factor in its decision. The complex will be on the Seattle streetcar line, which connects riders to the bus tunnel and light rail. The Seattle City Council last week approved taller buildings in the area, allowing three 12-story buildings on a portion of the development site. The release said this will let Amazon consolidate operations and allow a more efficient use of land.

Vulcan will develop some of the buildings as LEED silver or gold projects, pay \$6.4 million for affordable housing and other benefits, and start an aggressive transportation management plan, the release said. "Amazon.com is one of those great Seattle success stories and I'm pleased the company has decided to stay right here in its hometown," said Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels in the release. Founded by Jeff Bezos in 1994, and launched in 1995, Amazon was one of the first major companies to sell goods over the Internet. It began as an online bookstore, and now carries more than 40 product categories in the United States. It ships to customers in more than 200 countries.

\*\*\*

**Seattle Post-Intelligencer**  
**December 23, 2007**  
**New, old look for courthouse**  
**By Neil Modie**

Four years after Seattle municipal government got a new, sleekly modern City Hall, the seat of King County government across the street might get de-modernized. The latest effort to restore some of the 91-year-old architectural origins of the county courthouse will be a study of whether and how to strip it of the massive aluminum panels that cover many of the 12-story structure's original oak-framed windows. While reduction of energy consumption is a goal of many building modernization projects, it's open to debate whether removal of the window covers would lower or increase courthouse energy usage.

The giant, unattractive bands of aluminum were bolted to the building as part of a massive, scandal-tinged remodeling and "modernization" project in the mid-1960s. They cover windows on the courthouse's east and west sides, facing Third and Fourth avenues, respectively, as well as windows on the insides of the building's "H" shape, mainly to shut off views from courtrooms. "Then they put gypsum boards on the inside (of the building) so that they sandwiched the windows inside the courtrooms," said Jim Napolitano, a project consultant with the county facilities management division. "The windows are double-hung, single-pane oak windows, and they're huge," he said. "They're solid oak -- the frames, the sashes -- and they're beautiful. And they've all been hermetically sealed since 1966 or 1967."

The window proposal comes on the heels of a plan to restore the courthouse's original 1916 grand south entrance, made of irreplaceable Alaskan white marble but currently used as a loading dock. It faces City Hall Park, which the city plans to improve. County Councilmen Dow Constantine and Bob Ferguson, both Seattle Democrats, said the two courthouse restoration projects will return the historic building "to a more dignified appearance." Uncovering the windows, Ferguson said, and "restoring the historic integrity of the building and bringing natural light to the courtrooms will humanize the pursuit of justice and reconnect the people who visit this most public building with the story of its past."

Noel Treat, the county's deputy director of facilities management, said his understanding is that the windows were sealed to keep out energy-robbing sunlight and prevent jurors in trials from being distracted by looking out the windows. A supplemental capital improvement budget passed by the County Council and sent to County Executive Ron Sims last week included \$109,000 to do a feasibility and cost analysis of uncovering the windows and \$250,000 to begin design work on the south entrance. County officials haven't yet given the go-ahead to either project. Sims has recommended that if the council decides to proceed with the south entrance remodeling, it eliminate the courthouse loading dock to save money; convert it into the courthouse's main entrance, increase security staffing and turn the existing Third and Fourth avenue entrances into exit-only doors.

Ferguson and Constantine said uncovering the courthouse windows would achieve "energy savings through the replacement of the non-insulated aluminum panels with historically appropriate double-paned windows that match the courthouse's 1916 Second Renaissance Revival design." Not necessarily, Treat suggested. Cooling the building in the summer requires more energy than heating it in the winter, and by uncovering the windows, "there is some concern that this could have a negative energy impact" by letting in sunlight, he said.

In addition, the combination of the aluminum exterior panels and the interior panels, with the windows sandwiched in between, "created a sort of dead air space that has some insulative effect in the winter," Treat said. "We have to study how that upgrade would compare with ... what we've got in the existing structure. But we do have a concern that it could actually result in an increase in our energy usage."

\*\*\*

### **Seattle Times**

**December 26, 2007**

### **Snohomish Museum collection may find a home**

**By Diane Wright**

On April 1, the Museum of Snohomish County History's collection of artifacts was damaged when firefighters were forced to inundate a storage area with water as they fought a fire on the building's upper floor. Pumps removed standing water and blowers eliminated dampness, and once the restoration process had been completed, the loss was minimal — less than 1 percent of the collection. Out of the reclamation project, the collection gained new supporters. "Sometimes it takes something bad to happen for something good to happen," said longtime museum board member Gene Fosheim. "We hired a collection manager [Tracy Tallman], and she's been putting everything together and documenting everything, and it's just spectacular what a collection we really have. We found stuff we didn't know we had. "It's just amazing, what is stashed away. The problem is, it's still in a basement where nobody can see it."

The situation also pointed up a key complaint: There is no permanent home for the collection. That could change. "What we're working on is the Carnegie building," said Fosheim. The 1905 Carnegie Library, at 3001 Oakes Ave., next to the jail on the Snohomish County campus, is on the National Register of Historic Places. County Executive Aaron Reardon said in September that in order for the museum to occupy the building, it would have to raise \$1.5 million (a \$500,000 endowment fund and up to \$1 million in renovations to the building.)

The museum has until 2009 to accomplish that. The budget has gone to the County Council for approval, and the council is doing further research on the proposal. Under Reardon's proposal, the county would put \$100,000 toward the project, according to board president Peter Harvey. If the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., is "America's attic," the local museum's clothes, documents, books, photographs, paintings and artifacts, including former Gov. Roland Hartley's desk, serve the same purpose for Snohomish County's history. The county's 125th

anniversary in 1986 went largely unnoted on official levels, and historian David Dilgard hopes for better in 2011, when Snohomish County, created in 1861, turns 150. "Maybe a sesquicentennial is a time when the county government can take a kind of positive role in the idea that we are a historic entity ourselves. And have a responsibility to do something about that."

"While we have it in storage, we're not visible," notes Fosheim about the collection. "But just think of what we're losing. We're at that age where people are looking to give away a lot of collections. I want them to know that, hey, we're still there." The museum has a Fire Restoration Fund; donations are being accepted at Frontier Bank branches. For more information, call Tracy Tallman at 206-396-6650.

\*\*\*

Christine Palmer, Preservation Advocate  
HISTORIC SEATTLE  
Dearborn House, 1117 Minor Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101  
206.622.5444 x 226, Fax 206.622.1197  
e-mail: [christine@historicseattle.org](mailto:christine@historicseattle.org)  
website: [www.historicseattle.org](http://www.historicseattle.org)  
*Educate, Advocate, Preserve*