Place-Based Memory: Preservation as Community Care

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Abstract

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The topics of holistic accessibility, belonging, and public systems of cultural care are explored through the lenses of built environments research and critical disability studies. Using case studies as the primary research strategy, an examination of how the preservation process affects collective memory aims to shift social and built environments toward inclusive networks of care. Historic environments evoke individual and collective memories, carrying messages from the deep past to the forefront and informing future perspectives. Making heritage accessible in an environment that holds care as sacred better supports place memory. Infusing concepts of generous urbanism into the preservation of historic sites constructs more complete interpretations of the past, supporting cultural memory and creating secure connections to places that hold collective and individual meaning.

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A recent UNESCO report states that heritage is “inextricably linked to mental health and well-being, often generating positive emotions and a sense of connection, but also capable of triggering distress, trauma and negative memories” (2021). This statement should be foundational in planning and historic preservation with a disability lens. The work of preserving heritage is delicate, requiring a thorough understanding of integrity and significance balanced with the experiential quality of visiting and interpreting historic spaces. The philosophy of environmental determinism led designers to envision and build places with the intention of influencing cultural and social development. While this notion has been used as justification for global colonialism and perpetuated abuses of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through institutionalization, place attachment, and environmental psychology continue to be critical concepts at the forefront of built environment research and practice and may be an important factor in memory work. Research by University College London has found connections between heritage sites and mental wellness (Thorpe, 2019).

Beyond its contribution to wellness, heritage must be understood as an embodied experience. Intangible cultural knowledge transfers through bodies and across generations and materializes in the places that are celebrated and ingrained into collective memory. We need to interpret heritage sites through the diverse lived experiences that developed there historically and in recognition of the many ways that these places will continue to be experienced into the future. Contemporary scholars have begun the work of connecting critical disability theory and public histories and, in doing so, challenge the perception that accessibility is contradictory to preservation.

Despite over three decades with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as law, necessary material changes in our built and social environments are still going unrecognized and being underfunded. In 2015, Disability Rights Washington filed Reynoldson et al. v. City of Seattle in federal court, seeking to hold the city accountable for making the streets safe and accessible for those with mobility disabilities. The case was settled in 2017 with an agreement that Seattle would fulfill the promise of ADA over the next eighteen years by creating physical access for all people who live, work, and

travel to the city. Similar lawsuits have surfaced in other metro areas throughout the country, revealing the court system as a stronger force for change than policy. To achieve safety and true inclusion in the built environment as pandemics, natural disasters, and social unrest ensue, we must shift focus to reimagining public heritage spaces to be welcoming and inclusive for all users at all stages of life. More sweeping solutions should look beyond the still necessary specifics of curb cuts, ramps and grab bars to create environments where people experience belonging and opportunity however they devise it.

Accessibility and historic preservation have been at odds due to an insular bureaucratic framework that often prioritizes design integrity over civil rights and public sentiment. In Seattle, the landmarking process can be used to further property rights as well as economic and political interests, while the Seattle Department of Transportation's ADA program budget recently took a huge hit (Packer, 2023). The city has a responsibility to make public heritage accessible; while there is a breadth of literature that speaks to why and how to do so, much more work needs to be done to uncover the local placed-based histories of disability that must be engaged and preserved. This work is conceptually framed in ethics of care as developed by the feminist and environmental movements.

My long-term hope for this research is to shift public social and built environments toward networks of care that generate inclusion and nurture belonging. The goal of this thesis is to uncover the disability histories that exist in landmark designations, but more importantly, expose the disability histories that have been missing from the records. This work is personal and powerful to me because it centers my community and allows me to envision a more hopeful future.

By engaging theories such as place attachment, collectivism, universal design, and preservation authenticity, as well as rooting my objectives in intersectionality, decolonization, and community co-creation, I will further the very recent work of scholars such as Wanda Katja Liebermann, Gail Dubrow, David Gissen, Laura Leppink and Sarah Pawlicki, who have uncovered valuable and insightful public histories of disability. My work seeks to better support individual and collective place memory by examining how to make heritage accessible in an environment that holds care as

sacred. This examination involves assessments and interpretations of landmarks as well as recommendations on how to leverage policy and design principles in making historic sites more accessible for everyone.

To address my positionality as a researcher, I am a white woman who identifies as chronically ill and neurodiverse. My identification with disability is recent, though I grew up with strabismus, a cranial nerve malfunction in which both eyes don't look exactly in the same direction at the same time, limiting my field of vision and causing me deep insecurity. I have been a resident of Seattle's historically Black Central Area since 2021 and have come to recognize it as a vibrant home place that has held me through some of the most challenging experiences of my life.

Disability is not a monolith nor a narrative device but rather a nuanced and experiential facet of real life rooted in history, culture, and community. Disability associations can be found in nearly any historic place, as disability identity is pervasive, has always existed, and will continue to exist despite clear underrepresentation in landmark designations. I intend to document the history of a marginalized community and, in doing so, bring attention to the intersecting cultural identities that further inform the disabled experience and its connotations. Accessible provision of disability history is a form of representation that will help the disability community build more secure and positive connections to place. A social transformation toward more accessible ways of being, interdependence, and compassionate care will ultimately benefit everyone.

In the following chapters, I will explore holistic accessibility, belonging, and the feasibility of public systems of cultural care by examining how preservation affects collective memory. Holistic accessibility considers physical, sensory, emotional and spiritual needs, giving power and voice to overlooked and underrepresented communities when creating access. It considers ADA regulations as the bare minimum, goes beyond physical barrier removal, and considers experience in the accessibility of places. The Literature Review delves into two overarching themes: preservation as a social and cultural practice and accessibility as authenticity. Through the theme of preservation as a social and cultural practice, I cover community engagement and intersectionality. The theme of accessibility as authenticity involves a close look at both complex embodiment and holistic design. The following chapter, Methods, details my

procedures for completing this research and provides more background on how case studies were selected. My findings are presented in the following chapter, first with a brief history of the Central Area, followed by six case studies. The first four case studies encapsulate formal preservation, with three designated Seattle landmarks and one site that was nominated but failed to achieve designation. The following two case studies analyze grassroots preservation projects. The Discussion chapter applies a more nuanced review of the cases as well as their implications for practice. The final chapter, Conclusion, wraps up this research by defining true accessibility and how it ties to experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Illustrative of the central problem in this work, recent literature has brought the need for a broader recognition of disability to the forefront of planning. In their recent article for the journal, *Urban Planning*, Terashima and Clark reveal the precarious absence of disability perspectives in planning research (2021). Defining disability as a "misfit of capabilities with how a given living environment is organized," they discuss how a better understanding of the experience of people with disabilities and incorporation of disability perspectives could lead to more equitable built and social environments. Such a shift in the discourse could also lead to self-reflection in the field. Adding to this, the "invisibility of disability throughout planning reaffirms the othering of diversity" (Stafford & Vanik, 2022). Countering these issues calls for "going beyond discussing accessibility to recognize and delineate how deeply ableism is embedded in planning theory, research, education, and practice, and to engage with vision and imagination about what it would look like to plan and make urban policy from a foundation of disability justice" (Stafford & Vanik, 2022).

As noted by Alessandra Rampazzo in Memory Unwaste, "Architecture can speak through buildings: its value deeply lies within the material built and reveals itself when observed and listened to, when interrogated" (2023). Historic environments evoke individual and collective memories, carrying messages from the deep past to the forefront and informing future perspectives. Architectural memory represents knowledge

of place: that “what surrounds us is a result of a layering over time of events, memories, and matters…” The actions of professions must “identify their place within this complex net,” which implies “imposing a choice, an additional element to the context, a further writing on an already stratified palimpsest” (Rampazzo, 2023). In Notre Dame de Paris, Victor Hugo describes traditions as bringing forth symbols “beneath which they disappeared like the trunk of a tree beneath its foliage; all these symbols in which humanity placed faith continued to grow, to multiply, to intersect, to become more and more complicated” (1906).

Memories can be made from urban legend and retellings of places' stories. They are not always stable and may shift through generations. Today, most people equate the Colosseum to Ridley Scott’s 2000 blockbuster, The Gladiator, which received 119 award nominations and won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Though not a direct historical adaptation, “the movie is full of elements of Roman history and myth that weave a web of plausibility throughout the story and strengthen its themes and ideas…. Legend and history are intertwined, and the success of the film is a testament that the idea was a winning formula” (Lyon, 2022). In *Streaming media and the dynamics of remembering and forgetting*, Gambarato, et al. warn against the “tendency to study cultural representations of the past in isolation without taking the cultural and political contexts or audiences sufficiently into consideration” (2021). Media plays an important role in the dynamics of remembering and forgetting cultural content and constructs cultural memory in the collective dimension (Erll, 2011).

Memories are tied to geography while having the capacity to unravel larger networks of action. The experiential knowledge generation and synthesization of memory through connections to place can be refocused toward mobilizing for a better future that recognizes how place is always transforming (Gabrielian & Hirsch, 2018). Cultural significance is based in the collective memory of places that societies care about and is fulfilled in the experience of passing knowledge through generations as traditions, beliefs, practices, and social institutions (Taylor, 2020). Accessibility to culture and heritage can be defined as a “physical moment of material access to infrastructures and sites, a perceptual moment involving an understanding of the symbolic meanings inherent in cultural products and activities, and a culminant appropriational moment

when such meanings are appropriated, consciously accepted or re-presented and re-worked by those in contact with them" (Deffner, et al., 2015).

Disability History and Administrative Structures

Disability History

Historical accounts demonstrate the persistence of disability discrimination and ongoing struggle for disability justice. Stigmatization can be located in philosophical texts that date back to antiquity and were codified in sixteenth-century England's poor laws (Baynton, 2001). During the colonial era in the United States unjust characterization of disabled bodyminds was built into the framework of the nation, where the English conception of almshouses was continued. The Immigration Act of 1882 explicitly excluded anyone deemed disabled and tangled notions of ethnicity with disability through accounts of "defective races" (Baynton, 2001). As urban areas industrialized, ugly laws emerged as part of a unified project that aestheticized disability and criminalized begging. These policies served to "illuminate the persistent nexus of disability and poverty… [and] illustrat[ed] the complex interweaving of economic interest, social policy, and cultural (including aesthetic) imagination at work in the production not just of the unsightly beggar but of the nineteenth-century American cityscape" (Schweik, 2009). By the early twentieth century, the still-dominant medical model of disability shifted confinement practices from almshouses to institutions, where misguided reforms attempted to improve society through confinement and abuse (Lalonde & Argetsinger, 2015).

During the civil rights era, the formation of a collective identity led to a raised awareness of disability rights at the national level, pushing back against conventional notions that disabilities could be cured; instead, a common understanding emerged in which exclusionary social and built environments were the true disabling barriers. The 1977 504 sit-ins, organized occupations of Health, Education, and Welfare offices across the U.S., laid the groundwork for ADA that followed in 1990. Despite this victory, ADA saw a slow implementation, often referred to as the "wait and see" approach.

While the passage of ADA was initially considered a victory for the activism community, its success is best measured in improved access to the physical environment and a shift in attitudes and behaviors (Butler & Bowlby, 1997). Through an understanding of the experiences of people with disabilities as structured by both physical conditions and social organizations, designers can better accommodate the community's needs. Since ADA, the design practice has made strides toward accommodating people living with disabilities in their efforts, but a lot remains to be done. Perhaps their work would benefit from Adams' suggestion of "a sensory approach that actively seeks to consider how the physical and social world [is] experienced, interpreted, and negotiated via the body by foregrounding impaired bodies from the very start" (2021).

Local Administrative Structure

Locally, the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections (SDCI) administers and maintains the Seattle Building Code (SBC), which provides minimum requirements for design and construction. SBC Chapter 11: Accessibility, details the provisions necessary to make facilities accessible for individuals with disabilities. The chapter opens with a note explaining that the City does not have the authority to enforce or interpret ADA and other federal accessibility laws, meaning approval of a building permit does not guarantee federal regulatory compliance. While a necessary distinction, the local building code has outpaced the standards set forth in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines in terms of physical accessibility standards. Nonetheless, ADA is a civil rights law and, unlike local building code, does not indicate legacy provisions. SDCI publishes short documents designed to provide user-friendly information on permitting and code compliance, called tips. Tip #119 on Accessibility Laws and Standards states that the goal of accessibility law is to "ensure that, over time, all buildings are accessible to everyone" (SDCI, 2022). In addition to providing a definition of accessibility, the tip explains that accessibility is enforced through SBC, and those applying for permits are responsible for complying with ADA, federal design standards, and Fair Housing laws. WA state keeps its code closely aligned with the current edition of the International Code Council guidance.

Outside of transportation and construction, it was difficult to find people working on ADA at the City. ADA is based in voluntary compliance and enforced through a grievance procedure that is managed by two ADA Coordinators in Seattle. The process can be initiated by anyone who chooses and has the resources to file a complaint alleging disability-based discrimination in the provision of services, activities, programs, or benefits by the city. Seattle's accessibility office cataloged code noncompliance of publicly accessible city-owned and leased properties in 2016 and 2017 and is working on a barrier removal schedule and transition plan (Jacobson, 2023).

Regional Administrative Structure

The Historic Preservation programs in Seattle and King County do not monitor ADA compliance of landmarks or historic resources. Landmark stewards generally try to minimize changes to their properties and potential conversions of privately owned sites to public accommodations are often abandoned because the required accessibility upgrades are too significant. The King County Parks Department is in the very preliminary stages of a project to evaluate, collect and map ADA compliance at their sites with a third-party consultant (Thompson, 2023).

While regional government agencies are still in the early stages of addressing ADA, the Northwest ADA Center has been providing guidance. Part of the ADA National Network, it serves Region 10 (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington) with a mission to manage the process of changing our culture to be user-friendly to disability. Through partnerships with leaders in rehabilitation medicine, they provide training, fact sheets and resources to businesses, governments, and individuals.

Federal Administrative Structure

NPS' Technical Preservation Services department develops standards and guidance on caring for the nation's historic properties, including tax incentive programs, training and technical publications. A reaction to the passage of ADA, the National Parks Service published Preserving the Past and Making It Accessible for People with Disabilities in 1992, which breaks down how ADA should be applied at historic properties. Compliance requirements are triggered by new construction on and

alterations to historic properties. The law allows for alternative minimum requirements for landmarks when full accessibility would threaten or destroy the significance. The following year, Preservation Brief #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible provided further guidance and examples of accessible projects. After a lull in accessibility publications, NPS released All In: Accessibility in the National Park Service in 2020, highlighting efforts made starting in 2015. The report stated that annual progress reports would be published, however the last report that is currently available is from 2021.

The U.S. Access Board is a federal agency that develops national accessibility guidelines and standards, and functions as a coordinating body among federal agencies to represent people with disabilities. It is comprised of a twelve-member governing board of representatives from federal departments and thirteen President-appointed members of the public. Accessibility Online represents a collaborative training program between the ADA National Network and the US Access Board. The National Institute of Building Sciences and the Institute for Human Centered Design are the current leading non-governmental resources for universal design and accessibility programming in historic preservation.

With an understanding of how the disability community has been and continues to be underserved, a wider acknowledgment of the identity group and placement of their history within the context of the accepted and preserved historic narratives of designated landmarks will allow for proper validation and shifting of cultural values. To fully and sincerely engage disability histories, preservation must be understood as a social and cultural practice. Accessibility in preservation must be recognized as deepening authenticity rather than deterring from it. Finally, an examination of the processes of collective memory reveals the exclusion and erasure of historically marginalized bodies from the places they may have inhabited.

Historic Preservation as a Social & Cultural Practice

Preservation must be recognized as a social practice that enables connections and place identity. Disability conservation is a “process of managed change that maintains a supportive material environment” and works within a moral ecosystem

where “human embodied existence can thrive as it transforms over time” (Garland-Thompson, 2020).

The city is a historic artifact that is transformed by ongoing preservation processes and maintains discomforting subjective experiences into the material aesthetics of what we consider history (Gissen, 2020). Conceptualizing universal design as being informed by politics of interdependence and collective access, the built environment determines the ways we understand who gets to be in the world and how (Hamraie, 2017). Historic places should always be reinterpreted because the meaning that can be drawn from them expands temporally. Though preservation has historically been understood as a practice that memorializes places by freezing them in time, it is much more meaningful for this work to acknowledge current understandings of what has been conserved.

Several recent works reveal the social aspects of disability preservation. In selecting case studies for their Disability Justice and Public History project (2020), authors included criteria that recognized related social movements. The project is described as a venue for learning about the intersection points between the academic fields of Disability Studies and Public History.

Going beyond a study on Charles Thompson Memorial Hall and its history as a social space for the Deaf, they introduce a nonprofit that supports Black ASL (BASL), noting that white spaces like the aforementioned Hall reflect privilege, while Black spaces were often transient (Dubrow, Palicki, and Leppnik, 2020).

In a critique of the National Park Service’s portrayals of disability history, Meldon posits that representation of people with disabilities in the past will “help foster deeper connections with and welcome diverse visitors to the parks” (2019). After demonstrating the cultural significance of the Franklin D Roosevelt National Historic Site, her thesis recommends more interpretations of the histories of everyday actions (Meldon, 2019).

The conservation of the Paris Deaf Institute reveals that "conservation once was, and could be again, a fluid and socially inclusive practice, not one of architectural fossilization" (Park, 2020).

Liebermann's work conceives that disabled access needs to be reframed as a cultural practice or "a social art of remembering," which records how society has changed over time (2020).

The Presidio of San Francisco served an exclusive military function for over two hundred years but its 1994 designation as a National Historic Landmark District provided a mandate for the Presidio Trust to preserve it for public use. With a preservation approach based on adaptive reuse, universal benefits were opened to the public and a new layer of the park's history, which regarded stewardship and access as driving values, was uncovered (Garland-Thomson, 2020).

Historic sites represent and reflect current social and cultural values. One approach to preservation involves recognizing the "significance of historic places [as] not just grounded in the past, but also the present – in the collective, lived, ongoing experiences of communities, and in the meanings and associations that connect people to historic places" (Taylor, 2020). This approach calls for preservation criteria encompassing cultural significance and for practitioners to listen to and act on community values, which can ultimately "transform the field by better integrating intangible cultural heritage into policy and practice and [move us] toward a more truly people-centered preservation" (Taylor, 2020).

Community Engagement

Community engagement must be at the root of cultural preservation work. An understanding of the values and priorities of the communities that have been associated with the places being preserved is essential for a complete interpretation of their history. Calling on preservation's need for more social scientists, "dealing with present-day significance requires ethnographic research and community engagement, in addition to the usual historic research" (Taylor, 2020). Once regarded as serving elitist interests, the evolution of the practice "reflects efforts to expand the image of the preservation field by making it reflect the values of a wide spectrum of people from government managers to local communities" (Lee, 2004). A greater emphasis on community outreach can better address the values of the public to move beyond the values of preservationists that have historically held more weight. When nominations take into account the public's

understanding of why a property is significant, a closer connection with public history can be made (Lee, 2004). Access as a radical intervention embraces the idea that "when you open up culture to people who have been out of it, it is going to change and behave differently" (Kleege, 2020). Challenging established ideas in the traditions of public history and urban geography records social transformations where "change over time can be traced in incremental modifications of space as much as in an original city plan or building plan" (Liebermann, 2019).

New forms of preservation emerge through questioning who gets to participate. Disabled people must be understood as the experts of their own experience and history.

> *To imagine a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who is visually impaired beholding a monument more easily through the efforts of preservationists is powerful. But to imagine such a person becoming a preservationist is much more radical because it would likely result in forms of preservation outside monuments as we understand them. Here, we open up a space for other interpreters of the past to reimagine the future of history, its physical constitution, and its potential influence on the present* (Gissen, 2019).

Further, in The Human Condition, political philosopher Hannah Arendt says that "power preserves the public realm and the space of appearance, and as such it is also the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech, of the web of human affairs and relationships and the stories engendered by them, lack its ultimate raison d'etre" (Arendt, 1998). By rooting preservation objectives in social and cultural values that incorporate community cocreation practice, more people can be served and impacted by public heritage.

Addressing Intersectionality in Historic Preservation

Intersectional preservation work is a process of layering the entire histories of places, which conflicts with conventional preservation practice that limits significance to a single period in time. Lee's definition of cultural layering involves the combination of cultural diversity with demographic mobility, challenging preservationists who are used to working in homogeneous environments. It questions what should be retained in

places that are continuously adapted; in Boston's Chinatown, buildings previously used by other groups still reflect the physical and cultural interests of the Chinese community. Lee also posits a more holistic approach, which requires an understanding of the meanings of *history* and *culture* to groups outside of the mainstream. The approach is described as essential to many cultures that make "little distinction between the sacred and the secular and between history and religion" (2012). Intangible resources further challenge preservationists to come up with interpretations that are respectful and dynamic.

In Graves & Dubrow's example of a social hall in San Francisco's Mission District, the Women's Building, a single site has "anchored the social change efforts of Bay Area women, feminists, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and progressive groups, acquiring layers of significance as an early and ongoing laboratory for inclusiveness and experiments in the politics of intersectionality." This layering creates a more complete picture of the place and allows visitors to take away multiple meanings. Critiquing the application of a single social category lens, as it risks misrepresentation and "forecloses possibilities for political mobilization across identity lines in the interest of fostering greater social cohesion," Graves and Dubrow state that embracing intersectionality in preservation practice can "transform awareness that people cannot be reduced to a single identity" and become an "instrument of social justice by attending to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion" (2019). Preserving significance while not revealing culturally sensitive information requires a strengthening of ties between professionals and community members. As a cultural identity, disability can never be a single-lens issue and intersecting gender, race, and class identities shape what disability means and how it is handled.

In incorporating more inclusive perspectives into the work of preservation, disability historians treat disability as a social category alongside gender, race, and class wherein the intersections are at the heart of what is being studied (Park, 2020). Conceptualizing universal design for collective access focuses on "the multiple and intersectional forms of exclusion that inaccessible design produces" (Hamraie, 2013). A response could be creating *crip-centric liberated zones* as both physical spaces and the cultivation of experiences that develop through somatic and embodied reactions. As

described by Kafai, this approach seeks release from all systems of oppression with which different lives intersect and offers “tangible, accessible ways of creating communal and internal liberated zones that remind us of the knowledges, histories, and strategies of endurance that we carry” (2021).

During a panel discussion on disability studies and architectural history, Meldon characterizes disability as the ultimate marker of intersectionality and both a social construct as well as a real lived experience (2020). Minich calls for a shift from disability studies as a subject to a methodology, one that "involves scrutinizing not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attitudes in particular populations" (2016). Such a methodology is invaluable to the work of preserving disability history across all intersections of identity.

In Black Disability Politics, Schalk interviews Black disabled activists and cultural workers to better understand what she refers to as the *Black disability consciousness gap*, wherein “historicizing and contextualizing Black experiences of and engagement with disability is a necessary practice for understanding how we got to where we are.” Interviewees agreed that the racism of white disabled people and white-dominated disability rights organizations paired with the inherent white supremacy and classism of medical, legal, and psychiatric systems “have made identifying with disability difficult to impossible for many Black people.” Overall, “disability is much more explicitly engaged in intersectional approaches and is far more likely to be claimed as an identity by Black cultural workers, though identity claims are not necessary for doing Black disability political work.” In her *non-conclusion* to this work, Schlak poignantly states that “Black disabled people have a social and political history that we must understand in order to create collective liberation” and “looking lovingly yet critically at the work of our political ancestors is the only way to ensure that our work in the present is effective and lasting” (2022).

Accessibility as Authenticity

> *Love in action is when we strategize to create cross-disability access spaces. When we refuse to abandon each other. When we, as disabled people, fight for*

> *the access needs of sibling crips… When disabled people get free, everyone gets free. More access makes everything more accessible for everybody. And once you've tasted that freedom space, it makes inaccessible spaces just seem very lacking that kind of life-saving, life-affirming love* (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018).

Accessibility has been put at odds with preservation as a threat to authenticity, but it is necessary to move beyond this notion to come to creative access strategies that fully honor the culture and history of places. Gissen purports that many historic sites owe their architectural form to their engagements with people with disabilities, a case in which disability *is* authenticity (2020). Famed nineteenth-century French architect Viollet-le-Duc, whose major restoration projects included Notre-Dame de Paris, the Basilica of Saint Denis, and Mont Saint-Michel, described restoration as a modern endeavor that does not maintain, repair, or rebuild, but rather reestablishes. He wrote on the importance of project preparation: "Excavate everything, examine everything, and bring everything together, including the smallest fragments, taking care to note exactly where it was discovered" (1990). His idea of authenticity relied on a thorough interpretation of the creative choices of the place's original designer and, rather than restoring what once was, creating what was always meant to be.

Wheelchair access, often regarded as the emblem of accessibility, shows that authenticity is a malleable idea that may be seamlessly integrated into designs; "instead of heritage and disabled access being viewed as conflicting imperatives, they could share cultural aims." Challenging the common perception that making historic buildings accessible destroys integrity, case studies in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston and San Francisco's City Hall raise questions about what people find to be acceptable in terms of access, and how that can disrupt or contradict official policy and best practices (Liebermann, 2019). A decade-long public dispute led to the construction of a wheelchair ramp in the Board of Supervisors Chamber of the Beaux Arts City Hall in San Francisco, a magnificently domed building that is the pride of the area's preservation community. Its post-Loma Prieta earthquake renovation, completed in 1999, avoided ADA compliance by using building code terms such as "technical infeasibility" and "denigration to historic fabric." Lieberman describes the "faint zigzag

scribe line" of the original five steps that were replaced by the ramp authorized thirteen years later as "a palimpsest of democratic progress – or heritage lost." In Beacon Hill, Boston's charming historic residential district, homeowners opposed the installation of ADA curb ramps, causing significant delays and a multi-year litigation process that ultimately ruled in favor of public accessibility (Liebermann, 2019). What we choose to preserve is not a totality and, to that end, the deeming of what is authentic enough to be preserved would change if the field were opened up to less rigid understandings of authenticity and integrity.

Alterations that improve accessibility are an important element of the history of a place, as history is not static and continually unfolds. The preservation of disability involves a different set of frameworks for examining the material construction of the past beyond what gets presented as history. Rather than treating disability as a problem to be fixed, it can become an integral component of landmarks and monuments. "We must imagine historic sites and the experts engaged with them moving beyond this either/or binary in order to renegotiate historical evidence and authenticity with the demands of contemporary rights and questions of access" (Gissen, 2019). With the example of the previously mentioned Charles Thompson Memorial Hall, a more recent update to incorporate an ADA elevator was careful to preserve the windows between rooms that allowed for ASL communication when the site was being used as a social hall (Dubrow, Palicki & Leppnik, 2020).

In *Disability Things: Material Culture and American Disability History, 1700-2010*, disability historian Katherine Ott discusses the difficulty of understanding how bodies moved in the past, noting that "bodies that are unmodulated in movement, speech, or thought, those that cause a scene or bring attention to themselves because they do not fulfill standards of etiquette, are hard to recover" (2014). Understanding technology as assistive and material objects as neutral reveals that "stigmatization of the boundaries of use between some bodies and others is largely arbitrary." Further, using the polio vaccine as an example, "objects extend the authority of the state and usurp an individual's ownership of his or her body." Concluding that the problem of "lived inequalities produc[ing] unequal historical accounts" can be countered through the

interpretation of material cultures, they find that the agency and presence of those who did not leave archival evidence can be restored (Ott, 2014).

Anne Vernez Moudon argues that authenticity is a contemporary term that is only necessary due to globalization, and poignantly proclaims that our society is not doing enough to design for authenticity, defined as a world that celebrates culture, education and coexistence in lieu of capitalist ventures (2018). “Disability is the history of encounters between flesh and world written on bodies… existence across time and space writes or marks human bodies.” Taken further, “buildings are like humans in the way that they can be marked by existence over time” (Garland-Thomson, 2020). Both bodies and buildings hold memories; “deterioration and wreckage shape-shift into rootedness and balance, back to chaotic, back to the placid… sometimes still [the] bodymind is consistent and tranquil… is abundance, is respite” (Kafai, 2020). History and disability are dynamic; evolution of both places and bodyminds are natural temporal realities that are valid and worthy of recognition.

Victorian English philosopher John Ruskin critiqued the transformation of building ruins as a lie and questioned preservationists' right to intervene in the past.

> *Will those nations indeed stand up with no other feeling than one of triumph, freed from the paralysis of precedent and the entanglement of memory, to thank us, the fathers of progress, that no saddening shadows can any more trouble the enjoyments of the future, - no moments of reflection retard its activities; and that the new-born population of a world without a record and without a ruin may, in the fullness of ephemeral felicity, dispose itself to eat, and to drink, and to die?* (1925).

Ruskin’s anti-scrape rhetoric involved a conclusive understanding of memory and the suggestion that it could be erased. His perspective lacks nuance and overlooks accessibility, safety and how memory is continually created, adjusted, reinvigorated, and replaced. In The Cancer Journals, Audre Lorde reflects on the way the medical industrial complex establishes a sense of nostalgia around the prior body states of people who have experienced mastectomy, encouraging a dwelling in the past rather than "asserting herself in the present" and "coming to terms with the changed planes of

her own body… To imply to a woman that yes, she can be the 'same' as before surgery,... is to place emphasis upon prosthesis which encourages her not to deal with herself as physically and emotionally real, even though altered and traumatized" (Lorde, & Smith, 2020). The decision to scrape or not scrape in preservation should be made by the community connected to the place's heritage. Lorde's personal anti-scrape ideology was a reflection of her authentic identity as a Black Lesbian Feminist.

Heritage as Embodied Experience

> *Home starts here in my body, in all that lies imbedded beneath my skin… The body as home, but only if it is understood that bodies are never singular, but rather haunted, strengthened, underscored by countless other bodies… that place and community and culture burrow deep into our bones… that language too lives under the skin… that bodies can be stolen, fed lies and poison, torn away from us…that the stolen body can be reclaimed… And as for the lies and false images, we need to name them, transform them, create something entirely new in their place, something that comes close and finally true to the bone, entering our bodies as liberation, joy, fury, hope, a will to refigure the world. The body as home* (Clare, 1999).

As a field, Disability Studies seeks to create an understanding of the way bodies are marked as variant or deviant. Embodiment considers lived bodily experiences as conscious and subjective, involving "pleasures, pain, suffering, sensorial and sensual engagements with the world, vulnerabilities, capabilities, and constraints as they arise within specific times and places" (Wilkerson, 2015). A departure from Cartesian dualism, which portrays the mind as rationally disembodied, an embodied disability perspective lends itself to critiques of liberal individualism. The theory engages the relationship between the body and environment, speaking to the negotiations one must make to navigate in a world that wasn't designed for them (Wilkerson, 2015)

Rather than focusing on impairment, as with most models of disability, Siebers posits complex embodiment as a more comprehensive approach, suggesting it as a way to fully encompass the social aspects that are lacking from the social model of

disability. Contrary to the way the social model ignores the body in recognition of a disabling environment, complex embodiment "theorizes the body and environment as mutually transformative." It eliminates the objectification of disabled people as targets of the environment by recognizing how they transform it; "it not only incorporates agency; it cannot exist without active subjects who are defined by their ability to produce and share knowledge." An understanding of disability that forefronts embodiment doesn't rely on diagnosis. Rather, self-comprehension informs how one moves through the world. Self-identifying as disabled involves building a personal comprehension of societal knowledge; therefore, "complex embodiment theory reveals that disability is a body of knowledge" (Siebers, 2014)

Within feminist phenomenology, embodiment is implicitly gendered, and bodily changes are regarded as "forms of risk, disturbance, or breakdown, and irrationality." Through a critical disability lens, "embodiment frames bodily change as a horizon for self-understanding and self-definition, and the body as an agent interacting with others and with the world more generally" (Wilkerson, 2015). Applying a feminist disability theory to universal design, Hamraie considers excluded bodies and their interactions with environments to discern that "both the presumed body *and* the marginalized body are always implied in, structurally incorporated into, or actively excluded from, physical environments" (2013).

Embodiment is understood as pluralistic and intersectional. Misfitting in built environments can be viewed intersectionally as a philosophical stance as well as a material-discursive axis of oppression (Garland-Thomson, 2011). The experience of disability, Garland-Thomson explains, "highlights the disparity between the physical realities of our lives, between the ways our bodies function and are formed and the ways the world is built for certain kinds of bodies… The critical concept of misfitting emphasizes location rather than being, the relational rather than the essential." This understanding of "one's particularity and the material status quo" reveals a generative capacity without neutralizing identity (Garland-Thomson, 2011). Returning to Hamraie's framing of universal design, "politics of interdependence can privilege disabled people and others who experience misfitting in order to address intersectional inequalities through design" (2013). Considering how embodiment can be a site of politics and

interdependence, universal design is understood as “a value-based activity that generates material-discursive conditions of inclusion or misfit depending on what kinds of bodies are included within the scope of the “universal.” They suggest that a “liberal democratic understanding of access, disability, aging, femininity, non-normate size, and lack of resources” as objectionable dependencies lacks an understanding of how collective access can produce body-environment relations focused on social justice (Hamraie, 2013).

“Theories of interdependence and collaboration repudiate the concept of autonomy and control over one’s body as authentic measures of personhood and expand normative definitions of what constitutes social and political inclusion” (Wilkerson, 2015). Embodiment as intercorporality “emphasize[s] that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies… [the] construction and reconstruction of our bodies… alter[s] the very nature of these intercorporeal exchanges, and, in doing so, offer the possibility of expanding our social, political, and ethical horizons” (Weiss, 2013).

Heritage must be understood as an embodied experience. Intangible cultural knowledge transfers through bodies and across generations. It is necessary to interpret heritage sites through the diverse historic lived experiences that developed there and in recognition of the many ways that these places will continue to be experienced into the future. Disabled bodies are imagined as a “cultural artifact produced by material, discursive, and aesthetic practices that interpret bodily variation… specifically on the figures and narratives that comprise the cultural context in which we know ourselves and one another.” Further, “the figures and narratives of any representational system are often clearly apparent in the public rituals or ceremonies that produce them” (Garland-Thomson, 1998).

Preservation & Holistic Design

Holistic design places focus on emotional and sensory security, critical elements in the preservation of disability. In his seminal text for urban design, *The Image of the City*, Lynch describes a good environmental image as promoting a sense of familiarity

and emotional protection, rather than disorientation, stating that “a distinctive and legible environment not only offers security but also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience” (1960). Fundamental to efficiency and free movement, sensory cues of orientation from the external environment are also important to place memory.

Activists have started a push for recognition of Alzheimer’s as a form of neurodiversity. Kate Swaffer, CEO of Dementia Alliance International (DAI), critiques the handling of Alzheimer's diagnoses as "prescribed disengagement" and calls for *cognitive ramps* or supports that strengthen a person's remaining abilities and compensate for those that are lost (Graham, 2017). An attendant of the 2017 Environments for Aging conference, Alana Carter of HGA Architects checked herself into a healthcare facility to better understand the experience she was designing for and concluded with a “need to move design for seniors out of the care facilities and into museums, galleries, movie theaters, and the home. We need to bring empathetic design to all places. We need to design for the outliers” (Green, 2017). Through a study examining the mobility barriers and supports for people living with dementia outside of care settings, researchers found participants expressed emotional security in their neighborhoods and concluded that suburban areas are not inherently bad for the well-being of people living with dementia, but several barriers are preventing them from traveling as far as they want (Biglieri & Dean, 2022). Accessibility as a holistic process can be used as an approach that fosters well-being when applied to heritage and heritage sites.

The practice of care is deeply cultural, sociopolitical, and historically situated; “disability is unpredictable and messily transgressive of what is medically reportable, categorizable, and diagnosable as well as bureaucratically measurable, legitimatable, and archivable. It is more than frameworks (e.g., category, status, the disability model) can contain, label, and comprehend” (Nishida, 2022). Noting the elusiveness of care as a guiding ethic in urban theory, Williams coined the hyphenate *care-full* justice, which considers feminist ethics of care in a utopian envisioning of an ideal, just, and caring city. Care’s emotional and embodied positioning is contrasted with justice, which is considered rational and therefore more appropriate for governing decisions of the public sector, reinforcing an essentialist and problematic binary of care as strictly domestic and

justice as strictly public. Her research proves care to be “imperfect, ongoing and messy as people responded to the myriad forms of injustice in an attempt to heal and repair the city through everyday implicit activisms” (Williams, 2017). Inclusive and person-centered urban design and preservation practitioners must develop care responsibility if social justice will ever be achieved.

The possibility of a practice that preserves place-based disability histories is most transformational when considered for its therapeutic potential – not individual therapy, but rather a process that provides meaning for the collective, which individuals can in turn draw from. Special access given to people with visual impairments in art spaces manifests as an obligation and opportunity for them to share cultural knowledge with institutions and the public; these alternative modes of engagement with works of art, made in the interest of conserving the memory of a piece, impose new interactions and meanings (Kleege, 2020). Mental health and well-being are not universal constructs but may still be addressed through local contexts and cultural and heritage practices. Heritage has a clear link to mental health and well-being and the power to engender a sense of connection and pride (UNESCO, 2021; Thorpe, 2019).

Drawing on the social and cultural themes of community engagement and intersectionality, and the authentic accessibility themes of embodiment and holistic design provided a solid foundation for moving forward with research on Seattle’s place-based disability histories. Each theme informs the project method and provides a foundation for how disability justice could be approached in the fields of urban design, planning, and historic preservation. While memory is a common theme in the literature on historic and cultural preservation, I haven’t found the topic to be engaged through a critical disability and social justice lens, which is a gap I intend for this project to fill. A further disparity that this project addresses, the existing literature looking specifically at disability histories and material cultures lacks an understanding of the Seattle-specific context. A thorough understanding of the Central Area of Seattle’s disability history is executed through awareness of the work as a social science and reflection of current

values. It will find natural connections between authenticity and accessibility rather than pitting them against each other as a false binary. An intersectional approach rooted in community engagement, holistic design and understandings of the dynamic nature of disability and history will bolster this work and bring forth the healing and restorative capacity of cultural preservation.

METHODS

My research question, “What disability histories can be uncovered in Seattle area landmarks, regardless of designation status?” calls for mixed methods, using case studies as the primary research strategy. Employing thick description supports multiple and potentially contradictory meanings to serve my goal of arriving at an incisive placement of disability within urban history and memory. The stories of significant historic places provide implications for how cultural values are shaped and build a richer understanding of the construction of collective memory.

This work necessitates thorough definitions of disability and disability history. For the purposes of this project, disability is understood through Sins Invalid’s broad definition, which includes people with physical impairments, people who belong to a sensory minority, people with emotional disabilities, people with cognitive challenges, and those with chronic/severe illness (*Our Mission*, n.d.). According to Burch and Rembis, disability is a “vast constellation of meanings and lived realities expressed through equally diverse concepts and interpretive lenses.” Disability history uses critical framing to encourage a better understanding of both the embodied experience of disability as well its social and relational characteristics and seeks to “recover sources about and by individuals and groups who in many cases have been overlooked or actively ignored or silenced” (Burch & Rembis, 2014). I use person-first and identity-first language interchangeably throughout this work.

While accessibility is an integral aspect of the project, this thesis engages complex theory and applies nuanced and layered interpretations to discuss and critique current understandings and practices of preservation. As a scholarly product, this work

is intended for academics, policymakers, practitioners, community leaders, as well as anyone in the general public who has a particular interest in the case study sites and/or disability justice. While the audience for this type of work may be narrow, I intend for the impact to be broad.

According to Yin, “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena,” allowing for holistic and real-world perspective to be achieved through extensive focus on each case (2018). The case study approach has a unique ability to deal with a variety of evidence when cases overlap with histories that cannot be manipulated. Judgment calls and ethical dilemmas may arise out of the “continuous interaction between the issues being studied and the data being collected,” requiring delicate mediation (Yin, 2018).

Archival Research

Several data sources have been tapped for this research. City of Seattle landmark information, including nomination documentation, designation reports, and city ordinances (when applicable), is available through the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods website. Data is also available in local and national resource surveys, and I have received a list of public-facing, city-owned, and leased properties that were reviewed for accessibility code compliance in 2016 and 2017 by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI).

Further archival research is available through the Department of Neighborhoods Historic Properties Database, Seattle and King County Preservation Board agendas and meeting minutes, Washington Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Data (DAHP WISAARD), Washington State Digital Archives and Seattle Public Libraries Digital Collections. The King County Parcel Viewer has been consulted for property reports and historic plat maps. More specialized research was conducted utilizing the National Archives and Records Administration and UW Libraries Special Collections. Quality visual content was obtained through the Seattle Municipal Archives, the Seattle and Tacoma Public Libraries, and the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI).

Additionally, I implemented a content analysis by looking at both historical and contemporary media sources and other secondary accounts of my selected case study sites. This process provides insight into cultural attitudes on the place and/or aspects of it. This involves articles about those who designed, inhabited, or interacted with the site, and accounts of events that occurred there. Content by or about outside people or places that have referred to the subject site or community also expands my understanding and interpretations of subject sites. Preservation policy documents and practical briefs also inform this work.

Direct Observations

Fieldwork at the selected case study sites provide my personal understanding and feeling for each place. This involved one or more visits per site. Tours led by landmark stewards were preferred, but drop-in visits were necessary in cases where a connection to a landmark steward could not be made. During visits, I photographed the interiors and exteriors of the sites, as well as the nearby neighborhood context. When taking photos, focus was given to potential disability artifacts – objects or environmental features that tell a story about how bodies and minds moved or adjusted in relation to the space – as well as ADA features like signage, grab bars, and ramps (or lack thereof). Notes and voice memos were taken as appropriate during site visits.

Interviews

Interviews with landmark stewards, planning and preservation practitioners, and community members who have connections to the selected sites add more depth and meaning to the research. Feedback from stewards and practitioners yields insight into current practices and understandings in the field, while information from those outside of the formal preservation process who have personal connections to the site provides insight on the types of meaning drawn from the space. Essential sources of evidence, interviewees provide explanations of key events, insights that reflect relativist perspectives, and *shortcuts* to history through identification of other relevant sources (Yin, 2018). Though structured around a core set of questions, interviews were conversational and fluid, giving allowance for topical offshoots and anecdotes.

Core interview questions for landmark stewards as well as planning and preservation practitioners, include the following.

- What is your role and in what ways do you address accessibility in your work?
- Is ADA compliance for historic sites, designated or otherwise, being monitored at your agency?
- How does accessibility code in Seattle and Washington state compare to International Code Council (ICC) recommendations as well as to other cities and states?
- Have you collaborated with other agencies or contracted out accessibility reviews of historic sites?
- How important is universal access to sites for you and your agency?

Core interview questions for community members associated with selected historic sites include the following.

- What is your affiliation with the Central Area? Which neighborhoods have you lived in, and for how long?
- What is your association and experience with the selected place?
- Who are the significant people and what are the significant events that you connect to the selected place?
- What is your experience with accessibility (physical, sensory, emotional, spiritual) at the selected place?

I recorded the interviews when the interviewee consented and did my best to practice active and genuine listening, which was aided by note-taking. I also made efforts to corroborate information drawn from interviews with primary archival evidence.

Case Selection

Case study sites were selected based on three main factors: present use as a public amenity, association with cultural heritage, and spatial location in Seattle's Central Area. Three of the six case studies are designated landmarks, while one was nominated but failed to achieve designation. The other two case studies are examples of grassroots preservation projects outside of the bureaucratic process. As objects of

the past, I will have no control over the variables (sites/landmarks), which lends to the importance of a descriptive and in-depth investigation due to my limited ability to test and/or set a standard for analysis.

Starting with a list of public-facing city-owned and leased properties that was provided by SDCI, I compared landmark registers and historic surveys to isolate city-owned and leased properties that are either eligible for designation or already designated landmarks. Publicly owned sites are of value to my study because they can help support my claim that public entities have a responsibility to make heritage sites accessible. Bringing to light the disability histories of these sites further supports my claim. Beyond publicly owned sites, I also incorporated privately owned landmarks that are used as public amenities.

Another point of entry is an association with a significant aspect of cultural, political or economic heritage. This typically encompasses landmarks designated under Seattle designation criteria C. Non-designated cases were determined as encompassing this criterion despite a lack of formal recognition. My intent here is to focus on sites that aren't necessarily celebrated for the design of a prominent architect, but rather for their value to the community. Exposing disability histories of these places will further legitimize designation under said criteria, or make the case for why they could be designated as such, and ultimately promote my purpose to better support individual and collective place memory.

Finally, all presented cases are spatially located in the Central Area of Seattle, a historically redlined neighborhood with somewhat contested boundaries. The Central District, or CD, generally refers to the region east of downtown Seattle, bounded by 12th Ave on the west, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd on the east, Madison on the north, and Jackson on the south; however the greater Central Area is comprised of multiple smaller contemporary sub-neighborhood communities including Squire Park, Cherry Hill, Leschi, Madrona, Pike-Pine/Capitol Hill, Madison Valley and Judkins Park. Selected case study sites explore the breadth of these neighborhoods and further depict the histories of racial segregation, discriminatory housing practices, and modern gentrification.

The cases reveal synergies within the neighborhood and represent a variety of public amenities that address accessibility holistically. Physical, sensory, emotional, and spiritual access needs are met across the diversity of these spaces and their integrated uses.

Case Structure

Case studies are analyzed through the following aspects: location, history, designation and accessibility. Location highlights neighborhood context to establish baseline sociocultural and political understandings of the immediate area surrounding the site. It provides background into the community that historically and presently resides there and establishes a framework for how the site fits into the greater regional conditions and circumstances during periods of significance. History looks at the chronology of events that have unfolded at each place, drawing focus to how and why it was established and exploring its temporal evolution. Designation follows the process of how the site was established as a landmark through review of evaluation criteria, and outlines the levels of involvement from various stakeholders. Accessibility explores site access holistically by painting a complete picture of the building or site's construction and alterations in terms of physical approach, entry and use of the space, while also recognizing sensory, perceptive, communicative, participatory and social characteristics, as well as how barriers are formally and informally identified, navigated and/or removed. Each aspect contributes an avenue for analysis and lends insight toward larger discussions of place identity, universal design, cultural care and justice-oriented planning.

Descriptive, analytical, and interpretive approaches to considering historic built environments, landscapes, and material cultures uncover the pervasiveness of disability and indicate the urgency for a more expansive understanding of accessibility. Careful description involves an exhaustive understanding of the place itself as well as its stakeholders, bringing forth insight and perceptions that encompass the creation, preservation, and stewardship of each space. The analysis will be rooted in theory and apply current conceptual understandings of historic attitudes and experiences while providing direction and connections to concepts of interest. Interpretation must be

thoughtful and mindful, not to create arguable judgments but rather to present clear recognition of the layered histories of landmarks and the communities that draw meaning from them.

I intend to draw out the ways the preservation process and public histories influence collective memory, especially in recognition of how existing designations tend to favor dominant historic narratives, and, at the macro scale, how reinterpretations that give recognition to underrepresented cultural identities can reinforce the notion of heritage as a human right. I hope that taking multiple approaches to this research will produce a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of each place to lead to a thorough analysis. Recognizing disability as a cultural identity worthy of preservation is at the heart of my work. I aim to enrich the pre-existing narratives of these celebrated places as an act that centers care as sacred and can lead to public inclusion and encourage community well-being.

FINDINGS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL AREA

Since time immemorial, Seattle was densely wooded Duwamish land where diffuse waterfront villages of seasonal hunter-gatherer societies were organized around longhouse groupings. The abundant resources of the land, rivers, and sea were stewarded by the canoeing Tribe, whose social and ceremonial culture has been passed down through generations and oral tradition. European contact began in the early 1800s through the fur trade and early land settlements were established in 1851 and 1852. The Treaty of Point Elliott was signed in 1855, though its legitimacy has been questioned and its commitments have not been met. Squalli-Ansch si’ab Lescay (Chief Leschi) and Yakima Chief Kamiakim led resistance in the 1856 Battle of Seattle. Having never received reservation land, the Duwamish people became fragmented. Some members relocated to the nearby reservations of other Tribes, while others remained in and around Seattle. Native men found work in agriculture, fishing, and lumber mills and women sold crafts and shellfish. While their heritage has sustained, the Tribe has still not received federal recognition.

The Central Area contains the city of Seattle's oldest housing stock. Platting began in 1875 after land claims were made by N.B. Knight, George and Rhoda Edes, Carson Boren, and Henry Yesler. The area was considered "out of the way fringe" as the city's downtown core began to develop (Morrill, 2013). At this time, the city's small Black population was predominantly young men, but Black families began migrating to Seattle in the decades following the Civil War. In 1882, William Grose acquired land in the present Madison Valley area from Henry Yesler. An entrepreneur, Grose operated a restaurant and hotel in addition to his 12-acre ranch and was known to be a generous supporter of the small pioneer-era African American community. Before Grose developed the neighborhood, the East Madison area was heavily wooded and still inhabited by bears.

The 1887 cable car connection from Pioneer Square to Leschi Park along Yesler Way and Jackson Street attracted a diverse population of predominantly working-class Black, Japanese, Filipino, and Jewish communities to the area, while the 1889 Madison Park line attracted Black professionals, business owners and artisans, who purchased lots from William Grose, and later his son, George. In 1891, the Jesuits set up Seattle College (now Seattle University) and Immaculate Conception church nearby. In the decade of 1890, the Black population of Seattle grew by 1,112% (Veith, 2009).

In The Forging of a Black Community, Quintard Taylor describes Seattle's pioneer-era…

> *Seattle was filled with newcomers often unsure of their place in the social order. With few well-defined class or economic lines for all groups, many African Americans indeed felt they had found a place where they could breathe "free air." Moreover, the small black population was insulated from the more virulent expressions of racial prejudice by the presence of large numbers of Chinese immigrants and American Indians who throughout the nineteenth century bore the brunt of discrimination from the white population* (2022).

Many of Seattle's Black pioneers established church, fraternal, and civil rights organizations creating African American community links throughout the Pacific Northwest region and nationwide. Many farms and nurseries existed in the area into the

twentieth century. East High School, which would eventually become Garfield, was implemented as the area's first public high school in 1920 with 282 enrolled freshmen. As the community grew and settled, tension arose between a middle-class Black community that formed in the East Madison area, and a larger working-class Black community in the Yesler-Jackson area. The two neighborhoods slowly expanded toward each other and by World War II, would become what we now know as the Central District.

The African American population experienced a significant surge in the Central Area from the 1940s-1970s. Attracted by jobs in the maritime and war defense industries, the influx of Black population concentrated in the Central Area due to discriminatory housing practices. Racist covenants were applied to properties throughout the Puget Sound region while redlining kept the Black community in the Central District. After implementation of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, housing prices in the area began to increase steadily.

In 1970, the Central District comprised census tracts where over 90% of the population was African American but has experienced accelerated gentrification-driven displacement in recent decades despite remaining a crucial social, cultural, and political center for the Black and African American community. With extreme development pressure as real estate values continued to skyrocket into the twenty-first century, Black community has dealt with a severe displacement risk and subsequently dispersed throughout the region. According to Ramirez, "the city is still haunted by its past, and marginalized communities are still fighting much the same fight as previous generations – for police reform and racial equity" (2020).

To ensure that planning decisions continue to acknowledge the history of the Central Area, there have been specific neighborhood design guidelines created and aligned with other Seattle programs, which seek to facilitate public and private investments in neighborhoods that support those most in need (Central Area Neighborhood Design Guidelines, 2018). The guidelines are centered on accessible community open space, interactions between residents and shopkeepers with passersby, and transparency of street uses. To complement the city's overarching goal of "strong communities and people, as well as great places with equitable access," there

is a focus on growth that acknowledges the unique historic character of the CD. The Public Life section of the guidelines aims at retaining the rich characteristics valued by the community's long-term residents, as well as its new and future residents, and facilitates inclusive and equitable growth and development by focusing on walkability (Central Area Neighborhood Design Guidelines 2018). The Central Area's designation as a cultural district makes community engagement, design reviews, and landmark nominations all the more critical.

Both regulatory and policy efforts, as well as community engagement, are needed to address the complex problems that the CD is facing around gentrification, economic disparity, displacement, and, ultimately, a loss of community. A holistic approach to understanding the community fabric, including authentic involvement in both large and small-scale projects, is needed.

The changes at 23rd and Union are arguably the most evident representation of gentrification in the CD. In under ten years, all four corners of the intersection that once matched the low-rise scale of the surrounding neighborhood were developed with mid-rise mixed-use residential structures, bringing new residents and businesses to the area. When Lake Union Partners started developing the last corner as Midtown Square, which was to include a large public amenity, Rico Quirindongo, current Director of Seattle's Office of Planning and Development, stepped in to engage with and represent the community. Quirindongo leans into the promise of the social determinants of a community's whole health in an everyday environment that mirrors the values of the lived experiences of the designer. He explained, "be it private projects, public projects, [or] public private partnerships… [all] give a voice in the process such that… their needs and their culture are represented in the built works, but also [in] the programs that happen within those spaces… they become a part of the thing, the process, the outcome." In convening the community through online surveys and in-person engagements that included interviews with individuals and small groups, described as "a process of meeting people where they were at," his intention was to see how the project could "look like and represent the Black families and culture of the CD that we know and believe in, [and] that frankly [weren't] being represented in the project" (Philips, Sillman, & Quirindongo, 2022).

The resulting public space at Midtown Square became a preservation project in its own right. Its anchor business, Arte Noir has a mission to “create space, stability, opportunity, and training to serve the needs of the displaced Black creative community through [their] permanent location at Midtown Square” (Who We Are, n.d.). The public mural in the central square by Takiyah Ward is a reverse timeline of significant events and people from the CD. The new structure, along with the new Liberty Bank Building across the street, which replaced another building that was nominated but failed to achieve landmark designation, brought back two displaced businesses, The Neighbor Lady and Earls Cuts and Styles. The new public square has a commercial focus and is overwhelmingly landscaped in concrete save for one small planter that holds one singular tree. “In a neighborhood whose scale is majority single-family homes and robust and untamed gardens, the contrast of the lack of vegetation and large-scale enclosure gives pause for how preservation and varying scales can coexist in neighborhoods” (Aronowitz, et al. 2022).

WASHINGTON HALL

Location

Washington Hall is located in the Squire Park neighborhood on the west side of the Central District. Squire Park is adjacent to Yesler Terrace, a connector neighborhood between the Chinatown International and Central Districts. The area has a long and rich cultural history, including the first racially integrated public housing development in the United States, which was completed in 1941. It was developed with multifamily units and parks around Yesler Way from 1969-1974 as a part of the urban renewal program. Union St bounds the Squire Park neighborhood to the north, Jackson St to the south, 12th Ave to the west, and 23rd Ave to the east. Its main arterials are Cherry St, Yesler Way, and 14th Ave, on which the Hall is sited. The neighborhood is primarily residential with commercial uses on main streets. The Squire Park P-Patch, the Central District’s first community garden, is directly across the street from Washington Hall. Seattle University is north of the Hall, and the immediate blocks east of the Hall are newly constructed apartments and townhomes.

History

Figure 1 *Washington Hall, 1937*
Source: Northwest Music Archives

Built as a community center by the Danish Brotherhood of America in 1908, the eclectic Mission Revival and commercial style structure was designed by prolific Seattle area architect Victor W Voorhees and constructed by Hans Pederson, one of early twentieth-century Seattle's most prominent builders (*Hans Pederson*, n.d.). The timber frame and brick facade Hall, created as a performance venue and meeting space, as well as a short-term boarding house for immigrants, continues to be a locus of social and cultural activity. Its design interprets popular early 20th century styles with deeply recessed, arched entrances and formal façade. It features curved openings to public spaces and squared openings to private spaces. The symmetrical facade is topped by a distinctive stucco parapet at the eastern elevation with a floral cast relief design, which displays the

Figure 2 *Gathering of local Filipino American community*
Source: Filipino American National Historical Society

Hall's name and year of construction in white letters over bold red. The building's southern parapet was destroyed by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake in 1949 (Huygen, 2017).

Figure 3 *Jimi Hendrix with the Rocking Kings, 1960*
Source: Northwest Music Archives

The interior multiuse spaces serve several functions, including kitchen use, library, storage, meetings, ceremonies, shows, and dances. The Danish Brotherhood rented the space to groups of diverse backgrounds, leading to its prominence as an important dance hall and performance space for Seattle's various communities of color at a time when most other venues were segregated. Icons, including Duke Ellington, who lived with synesthesia, as well as Billie Holiday and local legend Jimi Hendrix, who both lived with trauma and addiction, have inhabited the hall. While a less direct association to disability, the people that commanded its stage anointed and vibrantly enriched the place.

In 1973, Washington Hall was purchased by the Sons of Haiti, an African American Masonic Lodge that completed various renovations over their years of ownership and continued renting out the space, which became a popular venue for punk, new wave, and progressive bands before its prominence in the early hip hop and grunge scenes. It also supported community groups by becoming a center for local labor union meetings, gathering space for the Communist and Socialist parties, and a site for Black Panther organization (*Revisiting Washington*, n.d.). On the Boards, a nonprofit arts organization focusing on contemporary performing arts with the mission of connecting a diverse range of communities interested in forward-thinking art and ideas,

Figure 4 *Washington Hall, 1980*
Source: Paul Dorpat via Black Power Unlimited

leased the main hall from 1978 through 1998. Despite nearly a century of consistent use, the Hall fell into a state of disrepair and was in danger of demolition for condo development after Sons of Haiti paid off their mortgage in 1999. Historic Seattle acquired the property in 2009 and launched a multiyear and multiphase restoration project, which created homes for three additional anchor organizations: 206 Zulu, Black Power Unlimited, and Voices Rising, who all currently activate the Hall.

Designation

Washington Hall was designated a Seattle Landmark in 2009. The City Landmarks Preservation Board unanimously accepted the nomination after presentations by representatives from the Central District Forum for Arts and

Figure 5 *Aerial Photo of Washington Hall*
Source: Converge Media, LLC

Ideas, the Filipino American Society, the Nordic Heritage Museum, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Squire Park Community Council, as well as several members of the public. The designation was approved based on Criteria C for its significance in cultural, political, and economic heritage as well as Criteria D of its embodiment of a distinctive style, period or method. The Statement of Significance acknowledges Washington Hall as symbolizing the Central District and greater Seattle by anchoring the diverse and fluctuating neighborhood for a century. It names the Central Area and North Rainier Valley area as home to a variety of ethnic communities and notes the prominence of nearby buildings including the Japanese Language School and Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. It honors the Hall's social and political associations, celebration of performing arts, and architectural context (City of Seattle, 2009).

Figure 6 *Washington Hall Grand Re-Opening, 2016*

Source: Alex Garland for Capitol Hill Seattle Blog

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

When asked about the significance of Washington Hall, current Seattle District 3 Councilmember Joy Hollinsworth cited personal hero Marcus Garvey's visit in 1924. The

influential Jamaican-born Black Nationalist leader founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914. The “Back to Africa” movement was alive in the Hall when he addressed the local chapter of UNIA members. This was just one example of the many social groups that utilized the space for cultural movement building; the Hall’s current anchor organizations continue this legacy.

According to Pacific NW magazine writer Brendan Kiley, “Washington Hall was not saved in formaldehyde, as a sterile monument to historic preservation by a predominantly white institution for predominantly white admirers in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood” (2024). Instead, Historic Seattle’s alliance with grassroots organizations continued the tradition of the Hall as a gathering space for diverse social groups and movements.

With a mantra to uplift, preserve and celebrate, 206 Zulu is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing accessible spaces and creating a community of unity, service, self-determination, and justice through the celebration of Hip Hop culture.

Figure 7 *Anna Nagy and Justine Palacio; 206 Zulu Throwdown, 2024*

Source: Kevin Clark for The Seattle Times

Co-director Kitty Wu relates the Hall's significance to its ability to create a safe space for marginalized groups to come together. Accessibility is central to her work and her involvement with the youth is one of the most rewarding aspects. The organization facilitates the participation of neurodiverse members with stim toys and allows extra time for those who aren't able to focus on preset agendas. They advocated for a more accessible design during Historic Seattle's renovation and cater to the visually impaired with instructions on the number of steps to the appropriate entry from the corner. Kitty suggested that accessibility could be further improved with a lighting and AV update as the current configuration requires the Tech Manager to move to several different locations, including a tech booth that doesn't comfortably accommodate a wheelchair.

Rooted in social justice, Black Power Unlimited, is a nonprofit corporation that celebrates a Black Central District through community-grounded liberation work around music, art, food, and culture. They also played an active role in the preservation and renovation of the building and currently manage rentals of the space with a mission to keep the Hall accessible. They partnered with Creative Justice, another nonprofit that facilitates mentor-artist intensive sessions to build community with youth impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, to open Creative Cafe on the first floor.

Figure 8 *Lift from the perspective of the Main Ballroom stage*

Source: Michelle Bacca, 2023

Voices Rising serves the community through their mission to create safe and nurturing community for LGBTQ artists of color,

empowering and strengthening the queer community at large. Two-spirit Sugpiaq, Black and Choctaw found Storme Webber described the Hall as a living building that holds memory and notes that “any piece of land held and used on behalf of all people is a rare treasure” (Kiley, 2024).

Accessibility as Authenticity

Historic Seattle’s renovation campaign kept safety and accessibility at the forefront while also honoring the historic integrity of the site. In addition to roof replacement and seismic retrofit, the historic windows and main facade were restored. The front entry has an ADA ramp, a lift provides access to the main ballroom stage and a large elevator located close to accessible parking grants access to all floors of the building. Contrasting other historic venues in the area, access for performers is considered in addition to access for the audience. Furthermore, the people stewarding the space during my visits were friendly and accommodating, enhancing my experience.

Figure 9 *Washington Hall sign at Squire Park P-Patch*

Source: Michelle Bacca, 2023

A more accessible design might include more prominent exterior wayfinding. While the large parapet presents the building’s name, it is obscured by large maple trees for someone at street level and small programming posters in windows are easily missed. Nonobstructive upper level window and stage barriers would also improve safety.

Directly across the street from the Hall, the Squire Park P-Patch provides a natural respite and includes art panels by Mary Cross that celebrate the Jackson Street jazz era. A

crosswalk from the Hall to the P-Patch would improve accessibility and foster a more natural connection between the two sites.

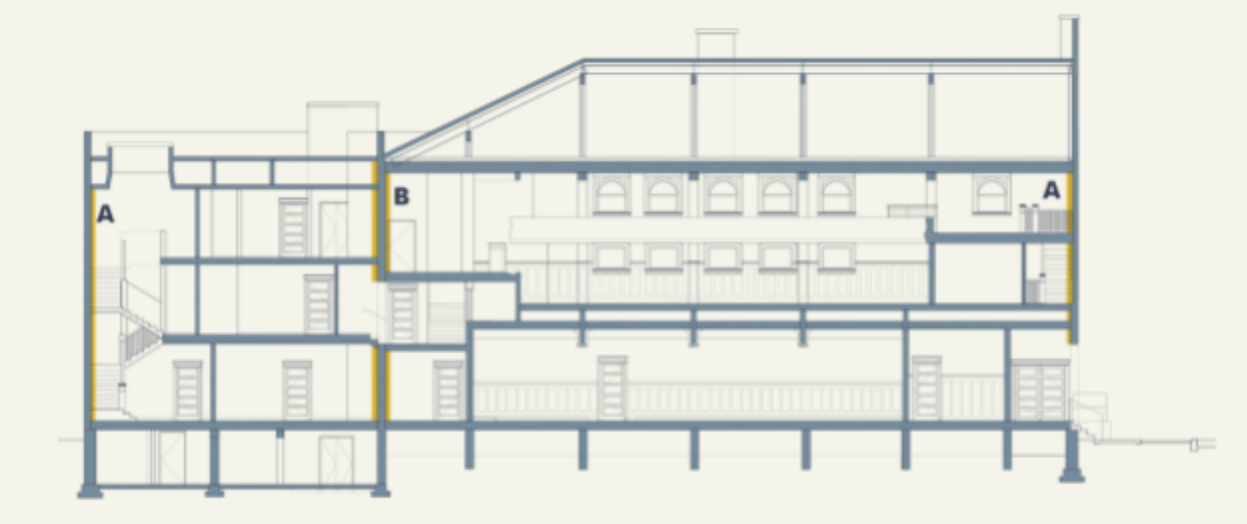


Figure 10 *Section showing shear wall locations for building strengthening*
Source: When Seattle Shakes (adapted from drawings by Ron Wright & Associates and Coughlin Porter Lundeen)

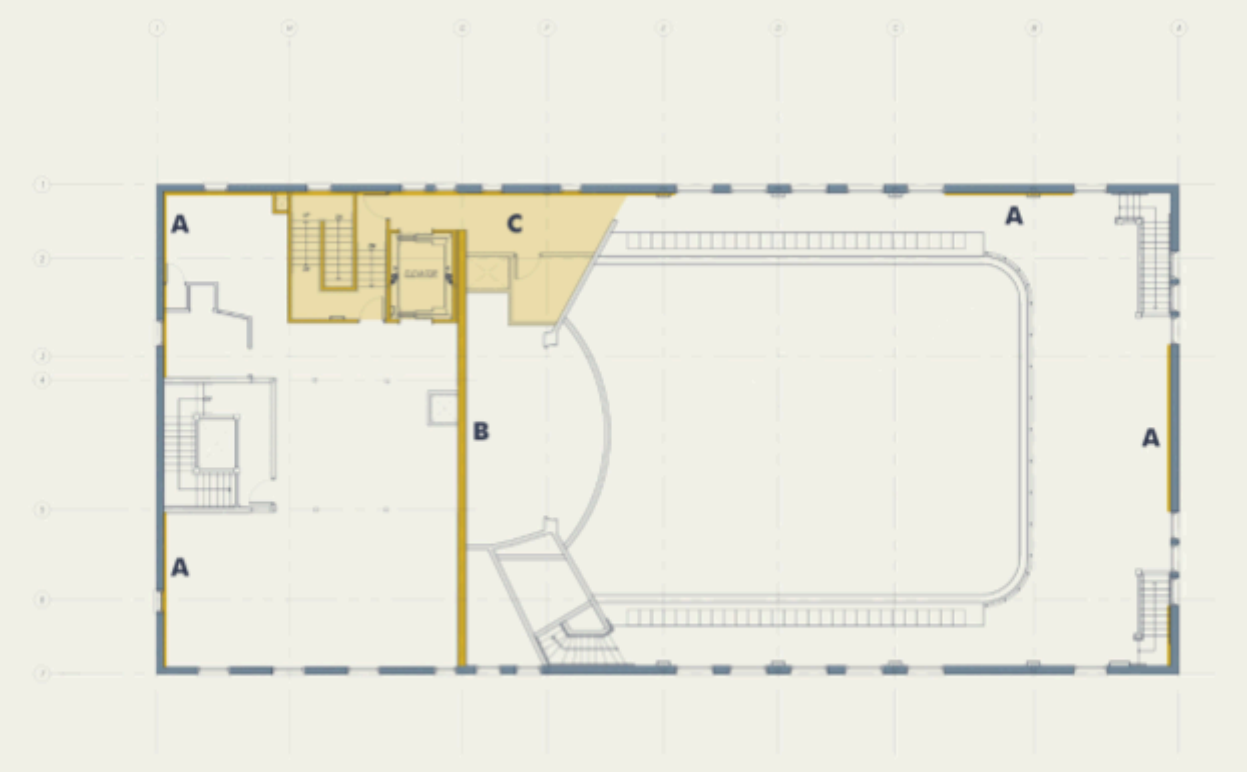


Figure 11 *Upper Auditorium Plan showing retrofitting for shear strength*
Source: When Seattle Shakes (adapted from drawings by Ron Wright & Associates and Coughlin Porter Lundeen)

FIRE STATION #23/BYRD BARR PLACE

Location

Byrd Barr Place is in the Cherry Hill neighborhood, a predominantly residential area south of Capitol Hill in the Central District, which had previously been called Second Hill and Renton Hill. Situated on the north-south ridge east of downtown and First Hill, its boundaries cross over into the Squire Park neighborhood. Byrd Barr Place is located on the southern portion of the hill which is roughly bound by Union to the North, Cherry to the South, and fills the area between 10th and 20th Avenues. Seattle's oldest Catholic Church and another landmark, Immaculate Conception, is just north of Byrd Barr Place, while the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Capitol Hill Community Services Office is across 18th Ave to the west and the Swedish Hospital Cherry Hill Campus is across Cherry St to the southwest.

History

A functioning firehouse for several decades, the front elevation of Fire Station #23 is marked by three large apparatus bays with entrance doors on either side. The original construction featured a hay loft and stables for the horse-drawn engine and iron embellished hose tower in the northeast corner. The two-story structure was built in 1908 with a Flemish bond red brick exterior and green-glazed clay roof tile, much of which remains today. The windows are wood-sashed with brick arched window heads. Over the years,

Figure 12 *Fire Station #23 (date unknown)*
Source: archINFORM International Architecture Database

there have been two small additions to the east, as well as renovations, including an updated flat roof system and retrofitted doors and windows. An extensive remodel in 1970 shifted the building's use to a community center, leaving very little of the original interior intact, though some original timber framing remains at the stairs and second-floor offices.

Figure 13 *Seattle Fire Department Lt. Boyd Southern and Lt. "Curly" George I. Hoyt, 1938*
Source: archINFORM International Architectural Database

The Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) was founded in 1964 as a part of the first generation of grassroots organizations funded by the Economic Opportunity Act and relocated from their original downtown office to Fire Station #23 in 1968. CAMP's mission to help underserved communities move from poverty to self-sufficiency flourished during the civil rights movement with over 25 community service initiatives launched by 1970. CAMP's Department of Beautification developed The Madrona Playfield and Powell Barnett Park, made improvements at the Coleman Playfield, and planted about 2500 maple trees throughout the Central Area in the 1960s and 70s.

Saxophonist and educator, Joe Brazil founded the Black Academy of Music there in 1972. In 1983, CAMP Director Eddie Rye Jr. led the effort to rename Empire Way, originally named for railroad baron James J Hill, the “Empire Builder”, to Martin Luther King Jr. Way. During the early 1990s, CAMP sponsored *Underground Railroad, A Journey to Freedom*, a cultural tour of the Central Area developed by Rhoda Seals Hollingsworth. Rosa Parks was a special guest at the event in 1996.

Figure 14 *Central Area Motivation Program, 1971*
Source: National Archive

The organization still provides safety-net services for the city’s varied population, including refugees, immigrants, and the disabled community, and works to build the political strength and economic wealth of the Black community. As advocates for equity, the organization’s firehouse headquarters has become an anchor for the African American community and a symbol of their place in the city despite the pressures of gentrification. In 2012, CAMP changed its name to Centerstone, indicating the many ways they create access to basic human rights. The name changed again, to Byrd Barr Place, in 2018, in honor of

Figure 15 *Roberta Byrd Barr, 1966*
Source: MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, 2000.107.014.25.02, photo by Tom Brownell

Roberta Byrd Barr, a local civil rights leader, educator, and journalist who headed the Freedom School during the Seattle school boycott of 1966. She became the first woman and African American principal of a Seattle public school when she took the position at Lincoln High School in 1973.

In 2020, the Seattle City Council formally transferred ownership of the property to Byrd Barr Place. That same year, through the organization's partnership with the Equitable Development Initiative and community fundraising, Byrd Barr Place began a renovation project with SHKS Architects and Contractor Rafn Company.

Designation

Fire Station #23 was recognized on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and designated a Seattle City Landmark in 1974. Though the building was designed by the Everett & Baker firm with no specific architectural style, it was nominated under several landmark criteria, including Criteria A for development, heritage or cultural significance, distinctive architectural style and character, innovation of design,

Figure 16 *Byrd Barr Place, 2023*
Source: Michelle Bacca

detail or craftsmanship, and an established visual feature of the neighborhood. The statement of significance focuses on the building's functional use as a fire station and modern architecture for a civil structure. It also raises the then-recent renovation to a community services center as a successful example of adaptive reuse of a historic structure, stating that the programming offered strengthened the place's cultural contribution to the community. While the designation terminology did not pass an initial scrub for disability association, the program always kept the mission of serving underrepresented groups, including those living with disabilities.

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

Since its inception, the structure has provided community services, but the 1960s shift to house CAMP made it a core gathering space for the community. Over the years, the building has hosted workshops, youth programs, information sessions, book launches, etc., and provided other free services. Tremayne Edwards, current Director of Operations at Byrd Barr Place, recognizes the significance of the organization as a social and cultural hub that was secured through its debt-free transfer of ownership from the city. Always looking to the needs of clients to

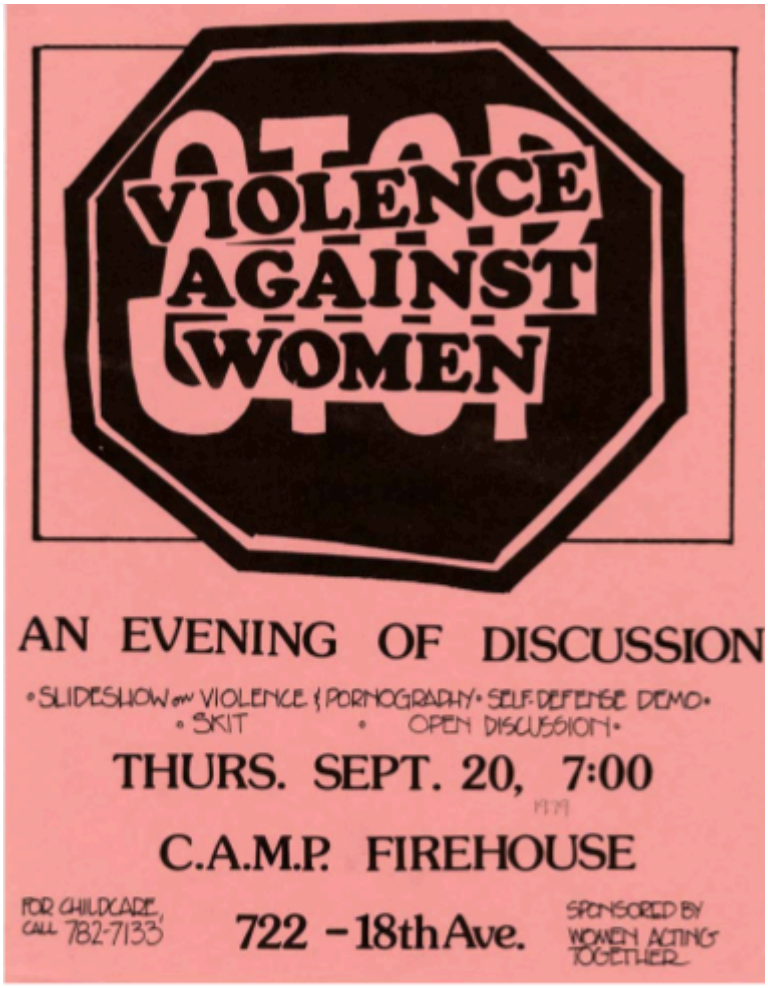


Figure 17 *Flier advertising "Stop Violence Against Women," an event organized by feminist organizers Women Acting Together (WAT) at the Central Area Motivation Program*
Source: MOHAI, Don Paulson Collection of Political and Social Ephemera. 2002.23.1.57.2

ensure inclusivity and going beyond disability accessibility, he works to remove institutional barriers and make the space accessible to smaller organizations and the community at large, noting that people don't have to qualify for the programming to be there. Along with the organization's founders and namesake, he named the current Chief Executive Director, Dr. Angela Griffin, as a trailblazer and significant person in the place's history, noting the way she exemplifies service above self through trauma-informed assistance to the most marginalized communities. Edwards sees the work of affirming people by helping them through crisis as transformational and understands a well-resourced community as a safer community.

As Seattle Parks and Recreation recently launched a renovation project for the adjacent Firehouse Mini Park, Byrd Barr Place staff is encouraging clients to get involved in the city's public engagement process. Planning and design will proceed through Summer 2025 and construction is slated for Fall 2025 through Summer 2026. Early plans suggest pathway accessibility as a priority, but not necessarily accessible play equipment. Edwards' vision for improving the park would include natural play areas and sensory engagement like quiet areas and water features. He also noted that play equipment and park design that cater to children with special needs create an educational opportunity for all users of the park.

Figure 18 *Original timber beams separate the upstairs elevator lobby with overhead skylight from the office space with acoustical panels in ceiling*
Source: Michelle Bacca

Accessibility as Authenticity

Byrd Barr Place's 2020 renovation kept focus on inclusive and accessible design. The

primary goal of the project was to preserve an exceptional community asset and modernize the building to expand social services and increase community space. Reflecting on the neighborhood's history, the project scope included standard preservation practices such as original wood window rehabilitation, seismic improvements, systems upgrades and fire suppression, as well as enhanced accessibility through reconfiguration, expansion of community spaces and the installation of an elevator. Contractor Rafn Company has a history of completing seismic retrofits and renovations of local landmarks, sharing in a culture of collaboration with Byrd Barr Place and partners. The design by SHKS Architects won an AIA Seattle Award of Merit and 2023 Preservation Award for Outstanding Stewardship from Historic Seattle. Adapting the building's character and improving its systems increased sustainability and serves the organization's mission to be a welcoming, accessible, and community-owned place that encourages inclusion and strives for equity.

Figure 19 *Sink, market entry, and elevator lobby*
Source: Michelle Bacca

Before a community member enters the food pantry, designed to look like and function as a community marketplace, they are met by a sink. Clean sink stations became a more common and crucial public accessibility feature during the COVID pandemic, showing up in public spaces for those that may not have ongoing access. Beyond the market entry are an elevator and large accessible bathrooms with more space than

ADA requires, and beyond that is the market exit which is met with an accessible water fountain/bottle filler and another clean sink station.

The upstairs elevator lobby is separated from the main office space by original timber framing beams. The office space features acoustical panels in the ceiling, which reduce noise levels and eliminate echoes, allowing clients privacy when working with service providers. The panels create a less noisy and more pleasant environment for those with sound sensitivities.

The same acoustical panels are used in the Bishop Adams Community Room, the largest space downstairs which receives natural lighting, another accessibility feature, through the large bay windows that lend the building its original fire station character. The room was named for one of the organization's founders and is used for various programming which facilitates community gathering and knowledge sharing.

The organization also utilizes technology to increase the accessibility of its programming and is always seeking out ways to improve its systems. Written materials are produced in multiple languages and translator apps are utilized on their in-house iPads when necessary. They are currently seeking funding for self-check in and queue management technology in the market. Their website utilizes the Recite Me cloud-based assistive toolbar, which allows website visitors to customize the website to meet their

Figure 20 *Bishop Adams Community Room*
Source: Michelle Bacca

needs through screen reading, changes to text size and colors, and language translations.

My first tour of Byrd Barr Place resulted from a random drop-in, and on top of all the impressive accessible and restorative design features, everyone I interacted with there was very accommodating and friendly. During a subsequent visit to the site, Edwards noted that he is looking to increase accessibility with more family-style amenities in the ADA restrooms and continual technology improvements. Byrd Barr Place exemplifies universal accessibility through physical features, programming and experience.

FIRST AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Location

First AME is situated on the east side of 14th Ave in the Pike-Pine corridor on Capitol Hill, a steep ridge east of the downtown Central Business District. The church is just north of Madison St, which forms Capitol Hill's boundary with the Central District. A large parking lot extends along the back and to the south of the structure. The three-story 1910 Goldie Apartments are located directly behind the sanctuary on 15th Ave. The surrounding area is predominantly mixed-use residential mid-rises and commercial buildings.

During the early 20th century, the Pike-Pine area was Seattle's auto-row district. After WWII, auto businesses moved toward the suburbs and buildings were repurposed as affordable businesses, services, and housing. The neighborhood attracted LGBTQ+ population and cultivated countercultural movements in Seattle's entertainment scene. The Pike-Pine Overlay Conservation District was established in 2009 with a new approach to preservation that is unique from historic districts, in that it focuses on preserving neighborhood culture over architectural integrity, encouraging the preservation of character structures over 75 years old. Already a designated landmark prior to its implementation, First AME sits at the eastern edge of the Conservation District.

History

The African Methodist Episcopal Church grew out of the Free African Society, a group established by formerly enslaved people in Philadelphia in 1787. The mutual aid society transformed into a congregation after Richard Allen successfully sued in Pennsylvania courts for the church's right to exist as an independent institution in 1807 and 1815. The break from the Methodist church was not due to theological differences, but racial discrimination. The church developed on a basis of civil rights and critiqued other denominations for not fully impacting those oppressed by racism, sexism, and economic disadvantage.

As the Pacific Northwest's oldest Black institution, members started meeting in each other's homes in 1886, when Washington was still a territory. Under the leadership of Seaborn J. Collins, the church set up a home-based Sunday School. Before the church's establishment, some of Seattle's African Americans would worship at white churches, but many withdrew and joined Black institutions due to their preference for emotional services and southern gospel hymn singing (Taylor, et al., 2022). The church was formally organized on August 13, 1890. Signers on the corporate charter were first pastor L.S. Blakeney, Secretary Milton Roy, Treasurer George H. Grose, as well as laity members S.J. Collins, R.R. Brown, Alfred P. Freeman and J.C. Blocker.

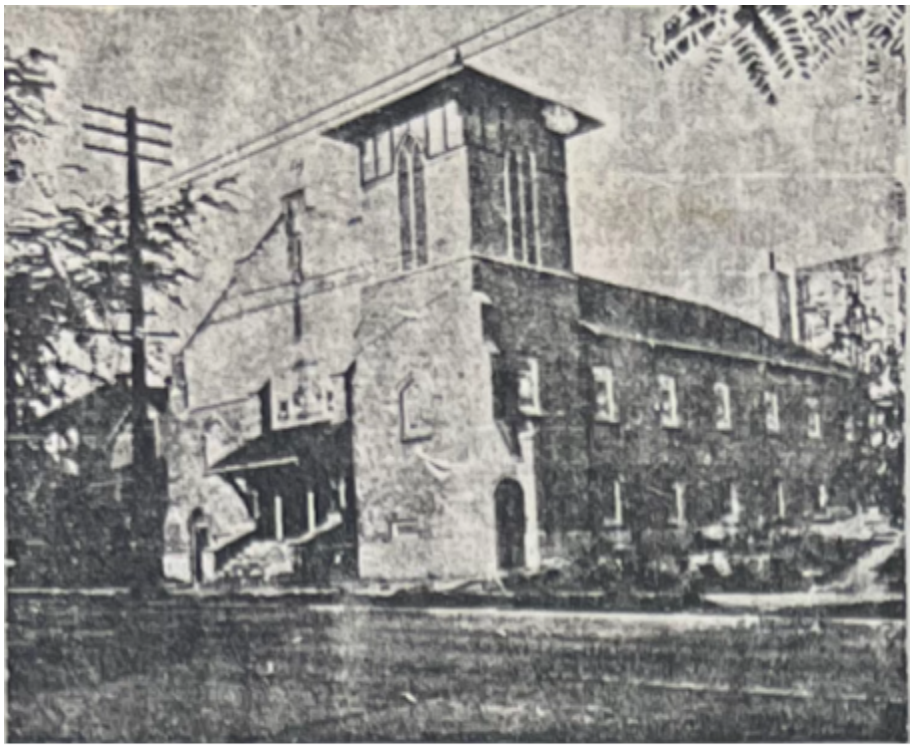


Figure 21 *1912 Sanctuary (date unknown)*
Source: First AME Archive

After an initial meeting at a restaurant in January 1890, the small group held meetings above a wagon shop in Stewart's Hall, which was located near 20th and Madison, until September of that year, when they purchased the present site of the church on Jones Street (now 14th Ave). Services were held in a large home where the Fellowship Hall presently stands. Ministers quickly moved in and out, having limited influence as the congregation grew from circles of extended families and friends, many related by blood and marriage.

Church members created a community social life and met new arrivals at the railroad station, inviting them to services and dinners. The church held annual picnic fundraisers and Juneteenth celebrations and protests. Public forums and "indignation" meetings were held at the church, then called Jones Street AME. Many secular organizations including Masonic lodges, political clubs, and social service centers evolved out of the church. In 1891, Emma Ray organized 15 women from the Jones Street AME congregation to address the issue of homelessness along Jackson Street. The group worked among sex workers and drug users, angering then pastor, Reverend

Figure 22 *AME Church Conference, ca. 1900*
Source: Black Heritage Society of Washington State Inc., 2001.24.2.43

Viney, who felt they were wasting funds needed for the church mortgage. Ray continued her efforts after the church withdrew its sponsorship.

The home where services were held became known as Lee's Chapel when it was remodeled in 1899. The Seattle branch of the Afro-American Council was formed at the church in 1900. As the congregation continued to grow, the current FAME sanctuary was constructed in 1912 and the separate parsonage was provided for succeeding pastors.

The original red brick and timber frame sanctuary was constructed on a concrete foundation with a two-story rectangular plan and pitched roof. It includes Italian imported memorial windows. The pedimented parapet at the front facade is cladded in orange stucco and topped with a white Celtic cross. Common to churches of this period, the bell tower at the structure's southwest corner features matching stucco cladding, louvered Gothic lancets, and Arts-and-Crafts influenced detailing. The side elevations included seven rectangular windows at both the sanctuary and lower levels. Originally designed by Alpheus Dudley, other Gothic ornamentations include two pointed-arch windows with hood molding and round arch openings flanking the main entrance stairs. The original central portal was framed by two simple columns and had a pitched shed roof overhang under a shallow Gothic arch transom with original stained glass windows.

In 1921, during the pastorate of Reverend J. Logan Craw, the original $10,000 mortgage was paid off. The two lots north of the sanctuary parcel were purchased by the church in 1923; the second mortgage was paid off in 1936. Both occasions were celebrated with mortgage burnings.

WWII brought an influx of African American population to the Pacific Northwest to work in the expanding wartime defense industries. First Church, as it was then called, had facilities that were too small to support

Figure 23 *Photo of McAdoo Addition (date unknown)*
Source: First AME Archive

the growing congregation, leading Reverend Toliver to launch a $100,000 remodeling and construction program in 1950. When launching the financial drive, the pastor said “the day is passed and gone when a church will open its doors only on Sunday and cease to be a part of the lives of people until Sunday again. Church facilities must be expanded so that the everyday life of the community will be touched by activities of the church.”

Benjamin McAdoo Jr, Washington state’s first registered Black architect, civic leader and low-cost housing advocate, was selected to design the enlarged sanctuary, kitchen, nursery and educational wing in 1955. A large choir space extended the sanctuary to the east in an orange stucco that matches the front parapet and bell tower. The shed roof over the entry portal was replaced by a streamlined flat overhang that bears the church’s name. A sign with the church's name was also installed above the transom. This renovation gave the interior of the sanctuary its now iconic configuration, featuring custom fabricated, red upholstered wood pews and matching carpet. The wood-sided altar includes a wood podium at the center of the altar has the Bible verse “This Do In Remembrance Of Me” in yellow text over a black background. The white

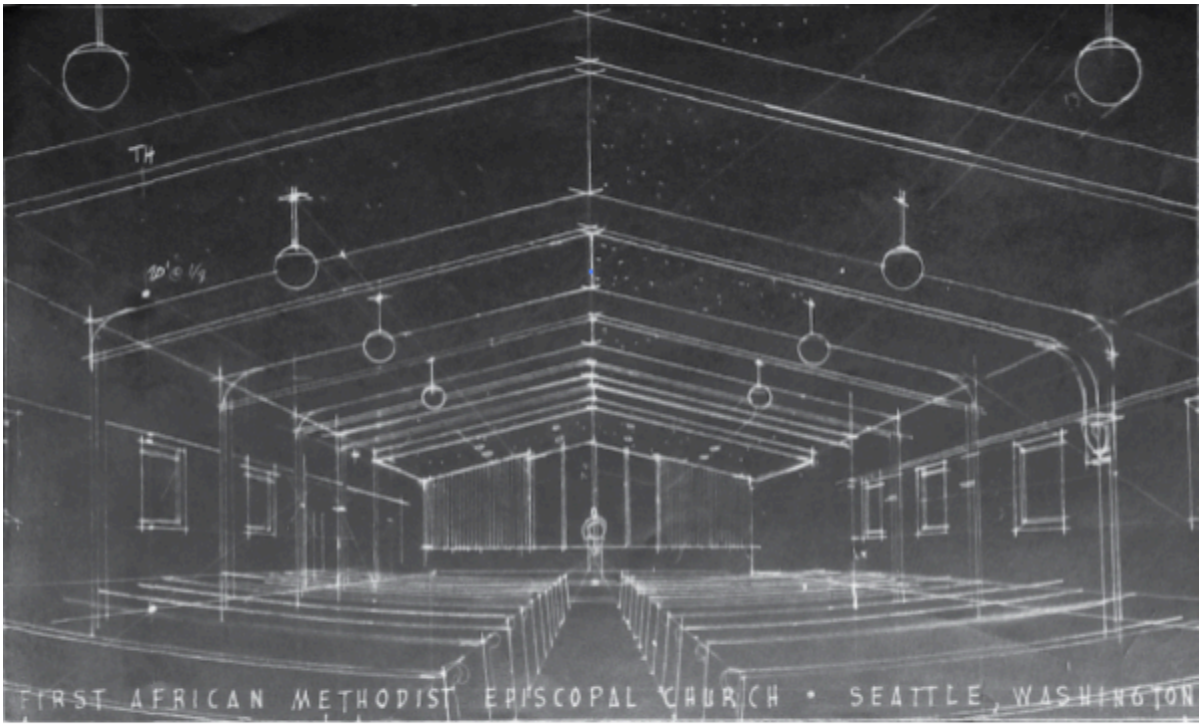
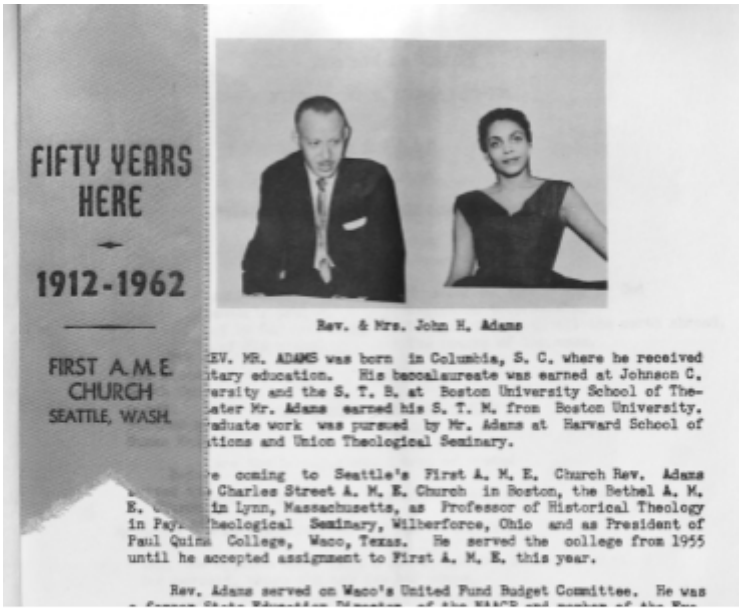


Figure 24 *McAdoo Sanctuary Interior Render*
Source: UW Special Collections 1232-003

ceiling features alternating hanging globe light fixtures and painted beams. The lots that would become additional parking areas were purchased in 1959. The closure of the expansion project was celebrated with another mortgage burning in 1960.


FIFTY YEARS HERE

1912-1962

FIRST A.M.E. CHURCH SEATTLE, WASH.

Rev. & Mrs. John H. Adams

REV. MR. ADAMS was born in Columbia, S. C. where he received ...tary education. His baccalaureate was earned at Johnson C. ...ersity and the S. T. B. at Boston University School of The... later Mr. Adams earned his S. T. M. from Boston University. ...aduate work was pursued by Mr. Adams at Harvard School of ...tions and Union Theological Seminary.

...e coming to Seattle's First A. M. E. Church Rev. Adams ... Charles Street A. M. E. Church in Boston, the Bethel A. M. E. ... in Lynn, Massachusetts, as Professor of Historical Theology in Pay... Theological Seminary, Wilberforce, Ohio and as President of Paul Quinn College, Waco, Texas. He served the college from 1955 until he accepted assignment to First A. M. E. this year.

Rev. Adams served on Waco's United Fund Budget Committee. He was

Figure 25 *Souvenir Program of the Fiftieth Anniversary Service of the First A.M.E. Church 1912-1962*
Source: First AME Archive

During the Reverend Bishop John Hurst Adams' time leading FAME, protests against racial discrimination in housing grew from frustrations around the City's inaction on a proposed open housing campaign. Reverend Adams joined together with Reginald Alleyne, president of the Seattle unit of the Congress of Racial Equity, to speak during an open housing rally at the church in October 1963.

Figure 26 *Civil rights marchers, 1965*
Source: MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Photograph Collection 1986.5.5939.14

On March 20, 1965, over 600 people marched from FAME to a rally at the courthouse in solidarity with the civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama.

At the rally, Reverend Adams stated "the problem of segregation and injustice is just as much here as it is in Selma. They are vigorously confronting their problem while we are going home and being complacent too much." A strong community leader, Reverend Adams believed that the advancement of Black goals must be intertwined with broader city-wide objectives and was quoted as saying: “I am a citizen of the community, as well as a citizen of the ghetto. I will work in the overall community of which the ghetto is a part, they must move together to achieve community.” Instrumental in local social movements, he chaired the Central Area Civil Rights Committee and co-founded the Central Area Motivation Program.

The church grew economically throughout the 1970s. The FAME Housing Association, which continues to support local seniors and families in Seattle’s Central Area, was formed in 1969. Under the guidance of Reverend Solomon Hill and Reverend Cecil Murray, the church purchased the Risher property at 3 West Dravus, Imperial Apartments at 1427 Pike, and Taxanda Apartments at 1128 13th Ave. A joint venture with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Bryant Manor was built at 18th Ave and Yesler.

On March 4, 1972, the formation of the Black Alliance of Educators was announced at FAME. Ethel Mitchel presented the newly formed alliance’s mission to bring together Seattle’s Black teachers, administrators, parents, and students at the start of the school district’s mandatory bussing project intended to desegregate the school system.

Figure 27 *Black Alliance of Educators announcement*
Source: MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Photograph Collection 2000.107.185.38.01

Construction of the Fellowship Hall, designed by Gabbert, Broweleit, Peterson and named for Sunday School superintendent Leona Bright Jones, started in 1987 and was completed in 1988. The architecture responds to the existing sanctuary building with the same brick and painted stucco, as well as matching pedimented parapets on the north and south ends of the hall, mirroring the front entry to the sanctuary. A large hall space with a stage occupies the upper floor alongside the Reverend Dr. C. D. Toliver Wing, restrooms, and lobby space. The lower educational wing was named for Sunday School teacher, Clara B. White, who taught at the church for 60 years and the daycare center honors Reuben and Johnnie Hammond who pioneered the hosting of refreshments after service.

Figure 28 *Construction of Gabbert, Broweleit, Peterson Addition, 1988*
Source: First AME Archive

The John and Magnolia Gayton Historical Library was dedicated by the children of John and Magnolia Gayton in 1990. With a focus on Black history, the library houses “classics, multicultural books and books about contemporary stars in the arts, sports, education, and math,” according to Francess Carr in an interview for the Seattle Times. During the 1990 dedication of the Gayton Library, Oxley said, “We have a responsibility

to preserve our heritage… We've changed so many times in history. We've been called colored, Negro, black, and now African American. We don't even know what we are now. The Gayton Library will help our children learn about who they are."

Despite development interests in the Capitol Hill site, the church felt that its voice needed to remain in Seattle though much of its congregation had moved toward south King County. In 2003, the FAME South Satellite was founded in Auburn. The MLK FAME Community Center was founded in 2011. The former MLK Elementary school in Madison Valley has been transformed into a dynamic center achieving its mission of promoting social, cultural, economic and community services to residents of all ages, races, cultures, and ethnicities.

The Capitol Hill Organized Protest of 2020 was held in close proximity to the church at nearby Cal Anderson Park. Pastor Anderson appeared for a press release with Mayor Jenny Durkin during the protests. He supported the mayor in reopening the East Precinct while agreeing with the protestors' principles, their right to protest, and the need for changes to how the city funds social services, opening up the church's Fellowship Hall as a space for ongoing negotiations. The pastor was invited to join the inaugural Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force, which develops recommendations for a $100 million investment in BIPOC communities to address the disparities caused by systemic racism and institutionalized oppression.

In early 2023, after over 50 years of operating Bryant Manor, a public housing project tucked into Pratt Park, FAME Housing announced a major redevelopment, which would add significantly more units, including family-sized units, which are lacking in the area. Housing to Home managed a process of moving residents of the demolished buildings, who have been given the right to return after the completion of development, to comparable housing at the same rental rate.

During the Fall of 2023, First AME participated in the McKinley Futures Nehemiah Initiative Interdisciplinary Studio, a course that brings together students from various disciplines in the University of Washington's College of Built Environments to disrupt displacement of the Black community through the Nehemiah Initiative. The initiative collaborates with Black churches to develop affordable housing and community spaces in the spirit of creating the beloved community envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. Together with FAME's Senior Pastor Reverend Dr. Carey G. Anderson and Evelyn Thomas Allen, Executive Director of FAME Equity Alliance of Washington, a sub corporation of the church that develops and manages affordable housing and promotes community economic development, a group of students collaborated to envision a future FAME Plaza affordable housing and public amenity development that would surround the landmarked sanctuary and provide even more family-sized units to the area.

Designation

The church was designated as a Seattle landmark in 1984 for its significance as one of Seattle's oldest and most substantial church structures, originally built for and continuing to serve a Black congregation. The nomination states that the church represents a most important element of the black community's heritage and continues to play an important social role in the city.

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

For over a century, First AME has been an institutional nexus of social life and a cultural guide for the Black community of Greater Seattle that extends beyond its landmarked sanctuary. As Seattle's oldest Black Church, FAME represents an anchor for the African-American community, which has

Figure 29 *Church exterior, 2023*
Source: Michelle Bacca

endured through early city development, held a prominent role during the civil rights era, and resisted the forces of gentrification that have pushed much of its congregation toward South King County. The secular organizations that grew out of the church and continue to thrive in the community are a testament to this. The church extends its sociocultural impact throughout the region with its various low-cost housing initiatives, educational programming, event sponsorship, and services at its southern satellite location, as well as with the current leadership's intent to build out the original sanctuary site as a community amenity that will provide even more desperately needed affordable housing in the area. Engaging the community has always been a central mission of the church and the guiding principles of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination involve an intersectional approach.

Accessibility as Authenticity

The original design of 1912 sanctuary was physically inaccessible, with stairs at the entry. The midcentury McAdoo expansion improved physical access to the main floor through the educational wing. Physical access to both floors was achieved with the 1988 expansion, albeit not ideally. The sanctuary currently can be accessed from the accessible parking spaces by those unable to use stairs through the Toliver Wing entry near the northwest corner of the site. To access the basement level from the main level without using stairs, one would need to exit through the same entry and wrap around the church, either down the steep sidewalk on Pine St or through the

Figure 30 *Church interior, 2023*
Source: Michelle Bacca

parking lot, to enter the basement via a ramp near the sanctuary's main entrance on 14th Ave. The installation of an elevator would improve access to all areas of the sanctuary and fellowship hall.

Some of the congregants I've spoken to view the church itself as a home place, and each other as a close-knit family community. Emotional and spiritual accessibility is abundant at FAME. As an outsider, I felt graciously welcomed when I attended a service on Sunday, November 19, 2023. Gospel music provided an avenue for participation as congregants swayed and clapped to the beat, or rose to their feet and extended their arms in praise. Pastor Anderson's sermon opened with a discussion of the harsh realities of global climate change. Connecting the anxieties of environmental destruction to the disproportionate mental health statistics in Black communities, the healing love of God was ultimately presented as an antidote. I felt safe and cared for while reckoning with my role as witnessing non-member of the church. From my perspective, there was an element of release – both audible and palpable. Beholding sacred worship in a space that was intended and designed for this community over a century ago, heritage became tangible in body movement and community synergy.

T.T. MINOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Location

Located at 1700 E Union Street, T.T. Minor Elementary School was sited on an east-west arterial commercial corridor, just south of Madison Street, which forms the edge between Capitol Hill and the Central District. The campus extends north to E Pike Street and east to 18th Ave. A parking lot that serves nearby Temple De Hirsch Sinai on 16th Ave bounds the playground and field, which connect to the west side of the school. The neighborhood was known as Minor, honoring the school's namesake, but is now more commonly referred to as Squire Park.

History

In 1888, Central Area children could attend school in a room that the school district rented from the Methodist chapel at 23rd and Madison. The growing population

and destruction of Central II school in the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 prompted the school board to approve the construction of four new schools. T.T. Minor was the first, designed by Seattle School District Architect Floyd Naramore in 1890. The school was named for Thomas Taylor Minor, who helped establish the Seattle school system and served as Seattle Mayor and on the Board of Education, before tragically dying in a canoe accident as the school plans were being finalized.

Figure 31 *T.T. Minor Sixth Grade Class, 1898*
Source: MOHAI, 1978.6598.9

The Colonial Revival school opened with over 200 enrolled students and served the area from Broadway out to Lake Washington. As rapid population growth continued, additions to the school were built in 1894 and 1900. Portable buildings were installed to house the School for the Deaf in 1921. By 1939, the school was considered inadequate and despite the Depression-era economic downturn, a special levy was passed for a new building to be constructed. School remained in session while the new building was constructed in 1940. The school's original architect, Naramore, also designed the new composite

Figure 32 *T.T. Minor School, 1905*
Source: Seattle Public Schools

concrete and light wood framed one-story structure utilizing the Modernist style, which became popular in school designs during World War II. The Roman brick masonry over concrete foundation facade had painted cedar siding and metal flashing. With the school capacity at 420 students, kids in the nearby Mann area had to be turned away. The program for Deaf students was relocated to three other district schools. The school enrollment transitioned from racially integrated to predominantly African American due to redlining and racially restrictive covenants in most other Seattle neighborhoods.

Figure 33 *T.T. Minor School for the Deaf, 1939*
Source: MOHAI

Figure 34 *T.T. Minor Construction, 1940*
Source: Seattle Public Schools

Figure 35 *T.T. Minor School, 1955*
Source: Seattle Public Schools

The school was severely overcrowded by 1957 with nine portable classrooms sited on the campus. By this time, the school district no longer staffed an architect and instead hired private architectural firms. NBBJ, Naramore's firm with Bain, Brady, and Johanson, was selected to complete a 1960 addition to the school. A two-story classroom building along 18th Avenue, on the north end of the lot, and a separate gymnasium were

Figure 36 *T.T. Minor Classroom Wing Addition, 1960*
Source: Seattle Public Schools

Figure 37 *Ruth Geissmar addresses overwhelmingly empty class of first graders during the Seattle School Boycott, March 31, 1966*
Source: MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Photograph Collection, 1986.5.11603.12

added. In 1965, T.T. Minor became one of the first schools to apply for and receive Title 1 funding, and in 1966, a library was constructed, filling in most of a southern courtyard that faced Union Street.

Civil rights advocates started pushing for school desegregation in the late 1950s. By 1966, over 90% of the students at T.T. Minor were African American. The district's voluntary racial transfer program from the prior year only saw a few incidents of white children transferring to the school. Stronger desegregation efforts continued with the 1977 Seattle Plan, which involved mandatory busing, and a 1988 controlled choice program through which parents could select any school within their geographic cluster. However, the school retained a predominantly Black student body into the 1990s.

In 1991, local businessman Stuart Sloan began the search for a new philanthropic venture, approaching Seattle educators and civic leaders but receiving no takers until 1995, when John Stanford was named superintendent of Seattle Public Schools (SPS). Stanford partnered with Sloan to challenge the system by launching a financial experiment in which Sloan pledged one million dollars per year for an enhanced program at T.T. Minor with reduced class sizes and services for students. Parents and teachers protested the decision as rumors circulated that Sloan was plotting to push out Black teachers and students (Forbes, 2000). The program was ultimately cut one year short in 2009 when the school was closed due to budget cuts.

Hamlin Robinson, the only nonprofit school in WA with a curriculum designed for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities, leased the building from SPS starting in 2010. In 2013, despite the community's outcry to maintain the school for children in the neighborhood, the Seattle School Board passed several amendments and school boundary changes, announcing that the Seattle World School (SWS) would open on the T.T. Minor site. The school's nomination for Seattle landmarking failed on May 7, 2014. The following year, the Building Excellence IV Capital Levy was passed to fund the new school; Hamlin Robinson was informed that their lease would not be renewed and had to vacate in 2015.

Designation

Larry E. Johnson and Ellen Mirro of the Johnson Partnership (now Studio TJP) completed research and development of the Landmark Nomination Report for T.T. Minor Elementary School from December 2013 through January 2014, in service to their client and owner of the property, SPS. The report was prepared to resolve the property's eligibility for landmark designation based on an Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) agreement, which requires that any potentially eligible landmark receive a permit to alter or demolish any projects that are over 4,000 sq. ft. in area.

Criteria A relates to the building's location as being significant to a historic event that affects the community. T.T. Minor was the first public school located in the Central Area, serving the neighborhood's predominantly African American residents, who could only own land in this area due to the imposition of racially restrictive covenants throughout the rest of Seattle. The Johnson Partnership found the building to be unassociated with a historic event significant to the community.

Criteria B relates to the landmark's association with a significant person that is important to the history of the community. The school was named after Thomas Taylor Minor, who served as mayor of Seattle from 1886-1888 and served on the School Board until his death a year later in 1889. The Johnson Partnership found the building to be unassociated with a significant person important to the history of the community.

Criteria C relates to the building's association with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community. T.T. Minor was the first public

school in the neighborhood, housed English as a Second Language and citizens classes in the 1940s, and was one of the first schools to receive Title 1 funding, a federal program to support equal education and educational achievement. In 1998, the school was the recipient of the country's first public-private partnership experiment of its kind, where philanthropist Stuart Sloan promised the school $1 million dollars per year for 8 years to provide holistic care for students at the struggling inner city school (Houtz, 2000). The Johnson Partnership found these associations to be notable, but not significant.

Criteria D relates to the building's distinctive visible architectural characteristics. T.T. Minor was the first school built in a "streamlined" Modernist style, notable for the horizontal emphasis in comparison to prevalent Colonial Revival style school buildings. The style was described as a local example of the International style, the first of its kind in Seattle, and a model for the future (Veith, 2009). Gaining greater popularity after World War II, Modernist school buildings incorporated new research around environmental controls through acoustical design principles, and T.T. Minor was consistent nationally with innovative schools in this style. The Johnson Partnership found the building's architectural characteristics to be interesting, but neither exceptional nor distinctive, especially with the additions in the 1960s.

Criteria E pertains to the building as an outstanding work of a designer or builder. T.T. Minor was designed by Floyd Naramore, the School District's architect, who came out of retirement to design the building in 1940, its first new school since 1932. The Johnson Partnership found that the building was not an outstanding work by Naramore.

Criteria F relates to the building as an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to its quality or identity. T.T. Minor was a Midcentury Modern innovative one-story building and the first of its kind in Seattle. The Johnson Partnership found that the building was not an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood, blending in rather than standing out.

Upon completion of the report, which describes the gentrification process in the Central District as a "renaissance" and time of "general economic prosperity" (2014), the Johnson Partnership wrote a letter to SPS, stating that the T.T. Minor building lacked physical integrity due to its 1960s additions, and did not meet any of the thresholds of

significance according to the six criteria necessary for designation to landmark status. Joe Wolf of SPS followed with a letter to the Landmarks Preservation Board, stating that SPS concurred with The Johnson Partnership's judgment that T.T. Minor failed to meet any of the six criteria required for designation.

The Landmarks Preservation Board reviewed the nomination on May 7, 2014; eleven board members were present, while one was absent. Six board members did not support the nomination, three were "on the fence;" and two supported moving forward with the nomination for the opportunity to learn more. The primary concerns included the 1960s additions, especially the library, the composition and paint scheme, a weak design, and that it "doesn't stand out." The Board asked very few questions after the presentation. According to the meeting minutes, they did not discuss but rather stated their opinions. In general, the board seemed to have followed the narrative as presented. The board moved to approve the nomination and the motion failed.

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

The nomination process was brief and swift, led by SPS and their long-standing nomination consultant, The Johnson Partnership. There was no public comment nor community participation. The date and time of the meeting (3:30 PM on a Wednesday) could have been a barrier to engagement. Community members openly and adamantly opposed using T.T. Minor for anything but a much-needed neighborhood school. A neighborhood group organized to speak out against SPS for their lack of transparency around the site's use, lack of accountability around analyzing growth data in the neighborhood to make decisions, and ignoring their own guiding principles to move the SWS project forward (joanna, 2013). The community made it clear that they had been asking for equitable access to a neighborhood school for years, which SPS denied (Hill, 2013). Perhaps, had they been given the chance, the community would have also shared their connection to this building and site.

This apparent anti-nomination of the T.T. Minor site further calls into question SPS' equitable practices over a significant period and in several examples, notably SPS' treatment of disability. The early twentieth-century Deaf school was relegated to

portable units and then shifted to multiple locations around the city when the school was reconstructed. Naramore was known to favor inaccessible design, “arranging his school sites to present an imposing façade, using terraces and stairs to accentuate a prominent projecting entry in the tradition of the Beaux Arts” (Johnson Partnership, 2014). SPS’ relatively short lease with Hamlin Robinson also forced the non-profit school to launch a $9+ million capital campaign to fund relocation efforts, the first in the organization's over thirty-year history.

Another example is the innovative public-private partnership experiment involving Stuart Sloan, which is a significant factor in the school’s perception and success within the Central District community. Critiques of the program include lack of community engagement early in the process, fueling rumors about Sloan, who is white, and his motivations to support a predominantly African American school. Some community members went so far as to say that Sloan’s ultimate goal was gentrifying the Central District, which he denies (Houtz, 2000). T.T. Minor’s program was used as a model for Sloan’s next venture, the New School at South Shore, located in South Seattle. The leadership there says they have learned lessons from the past: identifying the need to garner support from staff and parents early on, the benefit of starting from scratch as opposed to making changes to an existing program, and framing the initiative as a research and development experiment in education reform that can be studied and iterated on as a prototype (Shapiro, 2006).

While it is unclear whether SPS would have moved forward with opening the SWS at T.T. Minor had it achieved landmark designation, what is clear is that the process functioned in a bureaucratic silo and effectively kept the needs of the community excluded (Aronowitz & Bacca, 2023).

Accessibility as Authenticity

The landmark preservation process at T.T. Minor showed how public engagement with government processes can be unreasonably inaccessible. While this process is meant to represent the public interest by promoting the “prosperity, civic pride, and general welfare of the people” (*Chapter 25.12—LANDMARKS PRESERVATION*, n.d.), examining the history of T.T. Minor reveals that the public engagement processes failed

the public. Self-organized community advocacy relating to the use of the school was ignored, as had been done repeatedly over the school's long history.

The original 1940s design of some of the present school buildings was rather accessible for its time. The single-story layout did not create any major barriers for those with mobility impairments; however, the two-story classroom wing added in 1960, did, in the form of stairs. The leading-edge acoustical design was also favorable for those with sound sensitivities.

The SWS, an innovative hub of social services including education, a robust student meal program, and a health clinic, to name a few, serves immigrant and refugee students, of which the city of Seattle has been seeing a rapid influx. The SWS renovation brought the school to full local accessibility code compliance but also made the school extremely inaccessible to non-members of the school community. The campus is heavily locked down to ensure the safety of the students being served. The

Figure 38 *Seattle World School at T.T. Minor*
Source: Michelle Bacca

SWS upgrades also involved structural and seismic scope, as well as infrastructural improvements. The expansion project sought to modernize the school and was “designed to celebrate diversity” through “programmatic improvements [that] include new science classrooms, labs, a health center, and an increased student services center.” Drawing inspiration through colors and patterns from around the globe, TCF Architecture saw the project as a “communal gathering space to help strengthen relationships among students, staff, and families” (Seattle World School @ T.T. Minor, n.d.).

Figure 39 *Seattle World School at T.T. Minor Drawings*
Source: TCF Architecture

The T.T. Minor Playground was one of the first projects of the city’s Grey to Green Initiative, which converted asphalt surfaces to greenspaces at school sites throughout the city (City Parks Alliance, 2024). The site is owned by SPS and maintained and operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation. Planning for a renovation to the T.T. Minor Playground began in the Fall of 2023. Three design options were presented during public meetings on October 18th and November 11th, 2023. Funded by the King County Parks Levy and REET Real Estate Excise Tax, the project will replace the existing play equipment, create newly paved pathways to ensure an accessible route, and reduce the size of the sandbox to accommodate other uses such as play equipment for different age groups. Major construction is expected to be completed ahead of a Volunteer Service Day event on June 23, 2024. While the redesign will provide greater access

throughout the site, the play equipment will be inaccessible to children with mobility disabilities.

The SWS project was hailed as a symbol of the “dramatic growth that we have made in Seattle in our public schools over the past few years” as a “remarkable number of people voting with their feet, sending their children to be part of the city’s public education,” reflecting rising enrollment numbers in Central Seattle elementary schools (Osowski, 2016). As one of only a few schools of its type in the country, it was designed as a “preliminary entry point for immigrant children in their quest for academic achievement and full participation in American society” (SPS, 2024). The critique, however, is that it was planned to serve new residents at the expense of its existing community members.

Figure 40 *Seattle World School at T.T. Minor Interior*
Source: TCF Architecture

POWELL BARNETT PARK

Location

Powell Barnett Park is a 4.4-acre public park located in the Leschi neighborhood on the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Way between Jefferson St to the north and Alder St to the south. Its eastern edge is a steep hillside that runs adjacent to the backyards of residential houses on 29th Ave. Situated on MLK Way, which serves as an edge between the Central District and Leschi, it is one of several green spaces in the predominantly single-family residential lakeside district.

Figure 41 *Garfield track team practice*
Source: Garfield HS Yearbook, The Arrow (1960)

History

Originally used as an Army base during World War I, Powell Barnett Park was subsequently developed as a running track for Garfield High School, which is located a few blocks up Alder St from the park that was on Empire Way (now MLK Way). During the 1950s, the site was used to host an East Madison Mardi Gras celebration that coincided with Seattle's Seafair activities. (The tradition continues contemporarily as UMOJA Fest at nearby Judkins Park.) The site was abandoned in 1962 when a new track was constructed on lots adjacent to the high school and was later sold to the Park's Department in 1966. The Central Area Motivation Program organized the community to

Figure 42 *Powell Barnett as a member of the Rosalyn Band, 1900*
Source: The Medium via Douglas Q. Barnett

complete improvements designed by landscape architect, William Talley, in 1967. In 1969, sponsored by the Seattle Model City Improvement Program, Leschi Elementary School students chose to name the park after Powell Samuel Barnet, a local athlete and civil rights activist who founded the Leschi Improvement Council (now Leschi Community Council).

Figure 43 *Rosalyn pioneers Powell Benjamin Barnett and Melinda Johnson Barnett, 1924*
Source: Ellensburg Public Library

The park's namesake was born to formerly enslaved Powell Benjamin Barnett and Melinda Johnson Barnett in Brazil, Indiana in 1883. The elder Barnett moved his family to the then-Washington Territory to work the coal mines of present Rosalyn, WA, in 1888. The younger Barnett also worked the coal mines from ages 16 to 22 before settling in Seattle's Central Area and marrying Katherine Conna in 1906. He dedicated his life to community, serving as a board member for the Volunteers of America, 33rd District Democratic Precinct committeeman, president of the Seattle Urban League, chairman of the committee to establish East Madison YMCA, chairman of the welcoming committee to integrate Japanese American citizens after World War II, among many other esteemed positions. He spoke out against housing discrimination, working with the Leschi Improvement Program to preserve low-density

Figure 44 *Powell Barnett and Katherine Conna Barnett on their golden wedding anniversary, August 23, 1956*
Source: MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, 2000.107.014.21.03

zoning in the neighborhood, and was instrumental in the 1966 establishment of local bus route 48, which connects the Mt. Baker Transit Center to the University District through the Central Area, reestablishing a direct connection that had been missing since Seattle's cable car and electric streetcar system was abandoned in 1940. His service was recognized with praise and awards from the Jackson Street Community Council, Seattle Urban League, King County Council on Aging, and Seattle City Council. Two years after the park was named in his honor, he died on March 16, 1971.

Figure 45 *Powell Barnett being shown plans for park design, October 1970*
Source: Seattle Municipal Archives 28843

After the park had fallen into a state of disrepair, Barnett's granddaughter, Maisha Barnett, volunteered her time to fundraise and manage the Powell Barnett Legacy Project, a $1.3 million redevelopment effort that launched in 2005. With a background in investment banking and retail brokerage, the redevelopment was her first experience with placemaking, though she prefers not to define herself with labels like

landscape preservationist. Applying for a $15,000 grant from Starbucks, she was instead offered $550,000 to take part in the coffee company's inaugural Ultimate Park Makeover project, in which employees volunteered their time to help redevelop the park in just seven days. The project, of course, took months of prior planning with Starbucks and the Seattle Parks Department. Thurston Muskelly, then President of the Leschi Community Council, was a major fiscal partner. Starbucks' involvement brought in other investors, including through the donation of 70,000 sq ft of sod. Four artists and 24 children from Coyote Central, a nearby youth arts organization, partnered to create interpretive mosaic walls at the Jefferson and MLK Way entry to the park.

Figure 46 *Picnic area interpretive sign*
Source: Denise Dahn

Figure 47 *Kevin Durant taking the first shot at the renovated basketball court*
Source: Kotent Partners for Seattle Refined

Inspired by the work of her grandfather, the youngest grandchild of Powell and Katherine Barnett, Maisha was just a baby when her grandfather died, however, she grew up knowing about his legacy and acquainted herself with him through interview transcripts and recordings. She sees herself as a steward of the park, a role that she describes as involving a call-and-response process with the community. After the initial week of work with Starbucks partners in 2006, she continued to invest her time and care into the park, which was further improved with a picnic area and interpretive signage in 2009. A fitness zone, as well as a Kevin Durant Charity Foundation and Sparkling Ice-funded renovated basketball court, were

completed in 2016. Over time, the park has been used by Leschi Elementary School, Seattle Girls School, the Central Area Youth Association, the Seattle Opera, and other local community organizations and neighbors. It has been and continues to be used as the site of family, church, and school reunions. During an interview with Jeff Shulman for the Seattle Growth Podcast, Maisha noted the significance of the park's use as a long-standing greenspace in the Central Area; "Over the years… it has changed its name, but the use has remained the same, in terms of serving the community. So you have different generations with different experiences, and therefore you have the history of the park in its landscape that's multigenerational" (2019).

Figure 48 *Powell Barnett Park, November 2021*
Source: Michelle Bacca

Designation

An important historic cultural landscape and a crucial gathering place for Seattle's Black community, the park is not designated as a national, county, or city landmark.

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

In 2023, Seattle Parks and Recreation launched an expansion study for their 1997 Off-Leash Area (OLA) program, which provides open spaces for dogs to recreate off-leash as the number of dog owners in dense areas of the city has been growing exponentially. Powell Barnett Park was announced as one of nine city-owned parks being considered for an OLA. The nine parks were narrowed down from an initial 32 representing every council district, which were internally reviewed by landscape architecture, grounds maintenance, environmental analysis, plant ecology, and arboriculture subject matter experts. While there is a high demand for dog parks in the Central Area, many local community members, including civil rights leader and former King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, as well as dog-owning neighbors, opposed the use of Powell Barnett Park as an OLA (Canizales, 2023). Powell Barnett Legacy Project did not support the idea, citing safety and environmental risks, as well as general disruption to the long-standing use of the park, noting that an existing OLA, Blue Pond Dog Park, was just a mile down MLK Way. Seattle Parks completed the expansion study in March 2024, announcing new OLAs at West Seattle Stadium and Othello Park and stating that Powell Barnett Park was determined to be unsuitable based on community feedback and existing uses. The community and Legacy Project organizers were heard during the city's community outreach and the preservation of the park's use was realized.

Recent events at the park demonstrate the park's dynamic role as a public social space in a rapidly densifying urban area. On February 25, 2024, Ekene Ijeoma held an installment of Black Forest, a living monument and archive for Black lives, at Powell Barnett Park. Artist and director of Poetic Justice, the first art-focused group at MIT Media Lab, Ijeoma started Black Forest in November 2022 and has held plant-ins in metro areas throughout the country. A collaboration with "local and regional urban forestry nonprofit organizations and government agencies, social and spiritual workers, chefs, DJs, and volunteers," these events have "honor[ed] and remember[ed] Black life through new growth and breath as future evidence of the resilience and perseverance of

Black communities" with the planting of about 200 trees (Ekene Ijeoma: Black Forest in Seattle, n.d.). Discussing the symbology of trees around rootedness and generational lives, Maisha described the event as spiritual and emotional, allowing for people's memories in the space to lead to a physical connection and sense of ownership.

Figure 49 *New tree planted during Black Forest event*
Source: Michelle Bacca

On April 29, 2024, asylum seekers from Venezuela, Angola, and the Congo set up an encampment at Powell Barnett Park. The region has been seeing a disproportionate amount of the nation's asylum seekers due to the location of a US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office in Tukwila and general word of mouth that the state is welcoming to immigrants (Murphy, et al., 2024). While Washington state approved $32.7 million to help with the influx in March, the funds will not be available until July. For months, the group had moved around to different temporary shelters throughout south King County, funded by government, local non-profit, and mutual aid groups, and resorted to encampment sites in Tukwila and Seattle when funding wasn't available. Media sources reported that there were anywhere from 200-400 campers at the park, many of whom were children. With only two bathrooms to support the large group, trash built up as the migrant families endured cold overnight temperatures and rain, and neighbors expressed concern.

On May 6th, members of the Leschi Community Council organized a press release calling on the city to address the situation. Maisha addressed the media, saying, "The people in this park cannot wait another week for nonprofits, local and state officials to respond. The park itself cannot suffer the biohazards of human waste, garbage, and lack of sanitation facilities another week." By that evening, the city posted notices around the park, giving those camping two days to remove all of their belongings before

Figure 50 *Maisha Barnett speaking to the press about park conditions and urging the city to intervene as asylum seekers camp there on May 6, 2024*
Source: Nick Wagner for the Seattle Times

a sweep would remove any remaining property on May 9th. A representative for the mayor's office stated that they had moved families with children to shelters and would be cleaning and restoring the park to its intended use. Portable restrooms were placed in the park as the permanent restroom was closed for maintenance. As of May 18th, the restrooms remain closed.

Accessibility as Authenticity

The park can be accessed by Metro Route 8 at Alder and MLK Way, which has an accessible visual and vibrotactile pedestrian crossing signal and curb ramps in good condition. However, much of the surrounding neighborhood residential has poor-condition sidewalks, and some intersections lack curb ramps. There are three flat entries to the park on MLK Way and Jefferson St, but those on the steeply sloped side along Alder St require the use of long staircases. Tree root growth has caused the lifting of some paths, especially along the east end of the park, where the erosion of the natural hillside presents a safety risk to an already very steep walkway beyond the wading pool area.

When asked what improvements she would make, Maisha Barnett listed upgrading park furnishings, re-mulching, and improving pathways, potentially with more ADA-accessible grading and railings. She added that more funding is needed for wading pool attendants and park activations like free fitness lessons and 3 on 3 basketball tournaments. However, no major changes are needed in the landscape, which features both active and inactive spaces while remediating urban heat island

effect through mature tree shading. The park can provide an accessible experience for diverse users; cultural access through programming has been ongoing for many generations.

Figure 51 *Powell Barnett Park, April 2024*
Source: Michelle Bacca

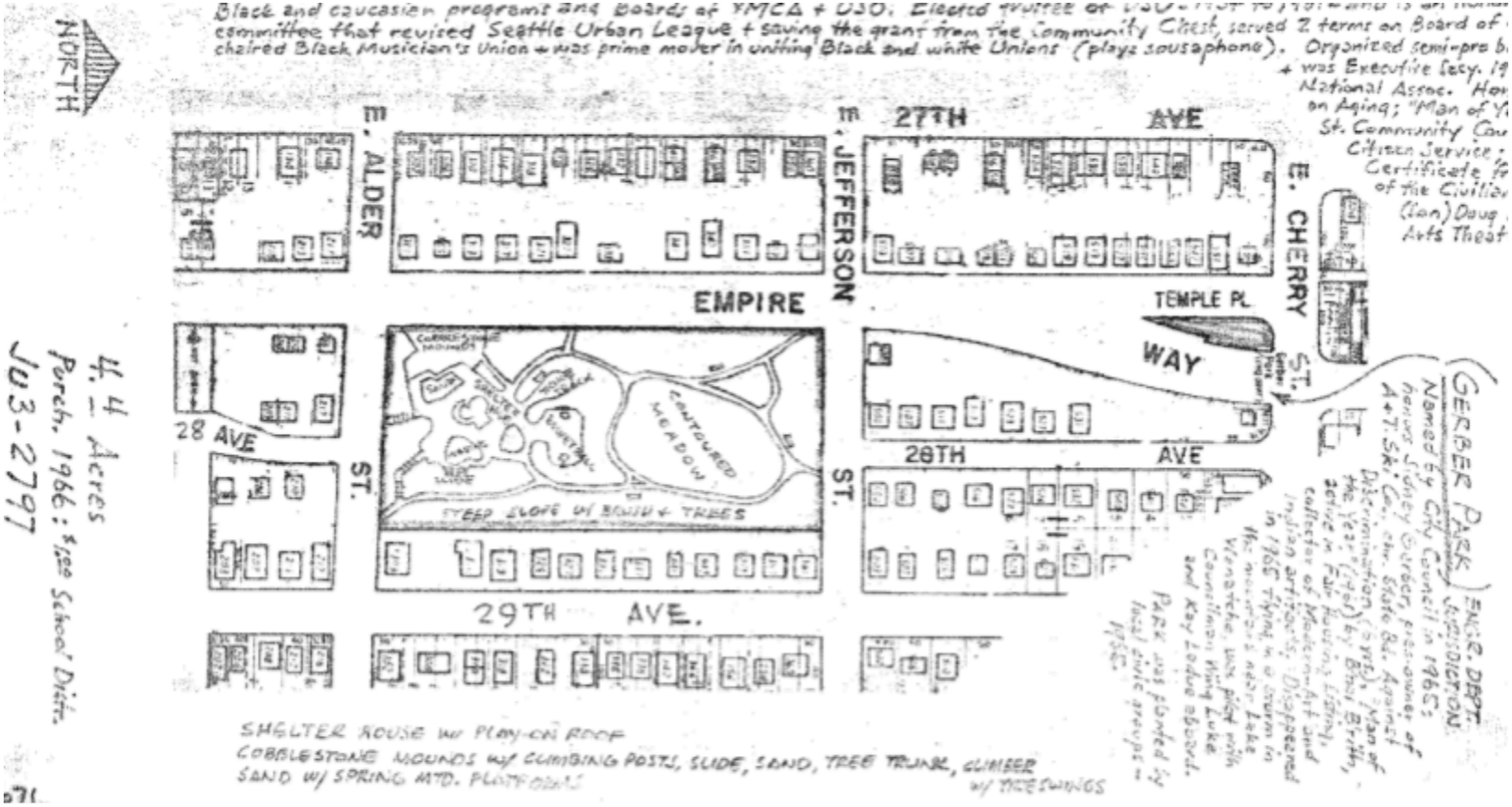


Figure 52 *Map of Powell Barnett Park and the surrounding neighborhood, 1973*
Source: Seattle Municipal Archives, Don Sherwood History Sheets

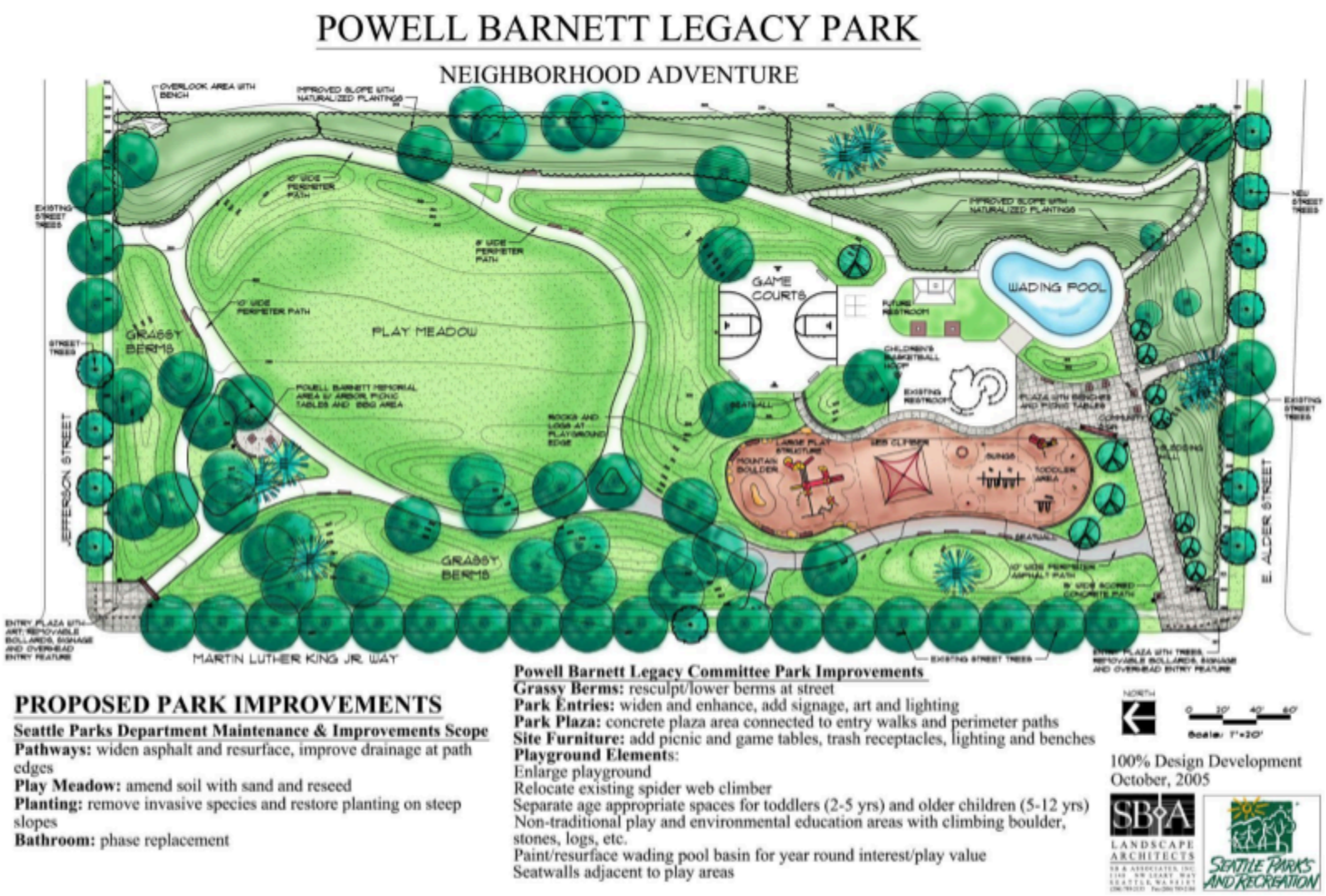


Figure 53 *2005 Park Redevelopment Plan*
Source: Maisha Barnett

WA NA WARI

Location

Wa Na Wari is located at the heart of the Central District on 24th Ave between Spring St to the north and Marion St to the south. The area was once characterized by its low-rise single-family residential form but has shifted dramatically in recent decades. Midrise mixed-use residential developments on all four corners of the historic intersection at 23rd and Union mark the most drastic change in form, just a couple blocks from Wa Na Wari. It is centrally located between the district's primary north-south arterials of 23rd Ave and Martin Luther King Jr Way and its primary east-west arterials of Union St and Cherry St. Located in the neighborhood once referred to as Mann and now called Garfield, it is just two blocks north of the Garfield superblock, which includes Garfield High School, Garfield Teen Life Center, Garfield Playfield, and the Garfield Community Center.

Figure 54 *Historic photo of Wa Na Wari House*
Source: Inye Wokoma

History

Opened in 2019, Wa Na Wari, which means “Our Home” in Kalabari, is a center for Black art and belonging in Seattle’s Central District. “Sited in a fifth-generation, Black-owned home… [its] mission is to create space for Black ownership, possibility, and belonging through art, historic preservation, and connection” (Wa Na Wari, n.d.-d). Wa Na Wari is a neighborhood art gallery with extensive programming focused on community relationship building. Despite setbacks associated with the complex web of funding and land use policy, true power emerges in the holistic health of the

neighborhood being fostered through an open dialogue around art creating connection and belonging.

Figure 55 *Historic photo of Wa Na Wari House*
Source: Inye Wokoma

Described as an *art intervention* by co-founder Inye Wokoma during a live podcast recording held in the space's living room on December 14, 2022, Wa Na Wari represents a weaving of the political and personal and an open source art activation that breaks the fourth wall and invites community to take a sense of ownership. When his grandmother was at risk of losing the craftsman home that was once "echoing with the sounds of Black joy, community organizing, and children at play" (Wa Na Wari, n.d.-d), due to the costs associated with caring for her Alzheimer's diagnosis, Wokoma partnered with fellow artists Elisheba Johnson, Rachel Kessler, and Jill Friedberg to find art-based solutions to this vulnerability. The community center sets a precedent for creative

Figure 56 *Members of the extended Green family at the Wa Na Wari home, 1950s*
Source: Wa Na Wari

strategies countering gentrification in the neighborhood, which can often feel insurmountable.

Wa Na Wari operates out of a single family home built in 1909. Wokoma's grandfather, Franklin Green, and his family worked as sharecroppers, domestic workers, and livestock farmers in rural Perry, Arkansas, during the early twentieth century. A part of the Great Migration in which five million African Americans dispersed from the South to the North and West between 1915 and 1960, Green and his seven siblings, whom Wokoma affectionately refers to as The Great Eight Grands, relocated to Seattle in 1947, searching for better job prospects, educational opportunities, and less racial violence. Franklin Green purchased the home at 911 24th Ave, which would later become Wa Na Wari, directly from white owners Thomas and Elizabeth Grace in 1951. The family would go on to own eleven homes in the neighborhood, six of which were along the three-block stretch of 24th Ave on which Wa Na Wari sits. The extended intergenerational family planted roots in the area, with 60 members living in CD family homes by the 1980s. As gentrification began in the 1990s, most of the Green properties left the family.

For his *An Elegant Utility* exhibit at the Northwest African American Museum in 2017, Wokoma stated the following.

> *The Central District is a place whose geography is familiar, but whose people and features are increasingly strange and unrelated to who I am… Being here makes me wonder how can we re-imagine and design communities in ways that don't erase what is already alive and present? What values are central to our imagination as we do this? How can we draw on the best human-centered traditions and imagine new cities where even the most vulnerable among us can thrive?* (Ishisaka, 2018).

With a large front yard and a shared driveway to the adjacent lot that the family also owns, Wa Na Wari's space blends into the scale and fabric of the neighborhood, even with signage on the front lawn and hanging from the front porch awning. Real Change News reported that "Wa Na Wari's lawful journey to become an art gallery involved a rigorous process to change their zoning status" (Shastri, 2020). The use of

the word lawful plays an interesting role in the language around placekeeping regarding Black residents in an area with rapid gentrification. The organization began the process of applying for a “change of use” permit in 2020 so that the home could house community events and become a viable cultural center (Shastri, 2020). After an exhaustive process, Wa Na Wari was ultimately granted special zoning within a residential neighborhood as an “administrative conditional use” zone. Under the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection, this “master permit use” is critically reviewed, has a public comment period, and an appeal process.

Figure 57 *Inye Wokoma and visitors at Wa Na Wari’s opening night, 2019*
Source: Wa Na Wari

Four years after the *An Elegant Utility presentation*, on Wa Na Wari’s second birthday, Wokoma wrote:

> *I am thinking almost entirely about The Great Eight, my Grands. They are the reason I could sit inside of this house, 911 24th Ave, in 2018, and hear its walls whisper to me. Reminding me of the lives lived here and love that is still seeping*

out of every crack and seam because of it. I could hear them whispering about stories that have not yet ended. They said that there was still so much more life for our family to live amidst those walls. So much more love to be poured into them. I could hear them whispering that I could help start the next chapter in our story here… It feels like coming alive again. Like a reawakening from a fitful sleep I wasn't sure I couldn't shake myself out of. Every day it makes me feel a little bit more whole after 20 years of watching my family leave the neighborhood, one person, one house, one rent check, one job change at a time (Wokoma, 2021).

Designation

Peripherally familiar with the unwieldy and subjective bureaucratic process, Wokoma has no interest in pursuing landmark designation for Wa Na Wari. The project's goal of being a dynamic, evolving, and growing living space does not align with the conventional methods of historic designation. Describing Wa Na Wari's importance as a holistic and collectivist experience, he wouldn't pinpoint a particular period of significance for the home, stating that his family was "ordinary folks doing what millions and millions of other people are doing… a regular working-class family having a regular working-class family experience" (Wokoma, 2024). As a social practice art project, Wa Na Wari creates new possibilities and imagination, which isn't static and doesn't need to look and feel exactly how it looked and felt in the past.

Accessibility

Preservation as a Social and Cultural Practice

With the Seattle Black Spatial Histories Institute (SBSHI), an oral history project piloted by its first cohort in 2022, Wa Na Wari proposes a process of ethical memory work determined to build Black futures rooted in Black pasts. During the aforementioned podcast interview, co-director of the project, Jill Friedberg asserted that the creativity and resistance deeply embedded into the CD is what makes Seattle, and described the neighborhood as a constellation in which the brightest stars are found at the intersections of human experience. Beyond preservation, the project works to amplify

community voices and build on the prevailing cultural fabric of the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. The historic preservation mission is rooted in memory and possibility, providing purpose, nuance, and intention for the space. It first two cohorts have been made up of Black creatives with the CD and greater Seattle connections, providing a grounded source of authenticity.

Beyond its archive-building contribution through the Black memory work of the SBSHI, Wa Na Wari's robust, culturally relevant programming enriches the community and provides important social services. Drawing back on the experience of always being able to get a plate of food there when the Wa Na Wari house was a family home, the Love Offering is a "community meal program that provides free-of-cost African diasporic and Native American-inspired cuisine, prepared by Black/Indigenous chefs, two days a week" as well as cake and coffee once a week (Wa Na Wari, n.d.-c). The Central Area Cultural EcoSystem, 21st Century (CACE 21) "seeks to build community power and capacity amongst Black Central District homeowners and Black cultural workers to advocate for land use policies that lower the barriers to creating more cultural spaces based on the Wa Na Wari model" (Wa Na Wari, n.d.-b). They have hosted an information session in response to the city's recent comprehensive plan update and partnered with the Department of Neighborhoods on the People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE), a civic-engagement education program. Sited at the Wa Na Wari Giving Garden, the BLOOM Food Justice Series centers gardening as a "practice of social justice and a tool for racial justice" and focuses on Indigenous knowledge systems, Black liberation, urban farming, healing, and combatting environmental racism (Wa Na Wari, n.d.-a). The Wa Na Wari house also hosts artists-in-residence and extends throughout the surrounding neighborhood with Walk the Block, an annual fundraiser.

Accessibility as Authenticity

The 115-year-old house is physically inaccessible, with staircase front and back entries and an interior second story. Washington District 37 House Representative Kirsten Harris Talley helped Wa Na Wari secure funding for ADA improvements, including a wheelchair lift and first-floor restroom, in 2021 and 2022, but the

organization continues to deal with site control hurdles around land use, zoning, and resolving the family estate holding up the renovations. Wa Na Wari collaborated with GGLO design firm on plans and credits all of Wa Na Wari's individual and organizational donors as supporting its goal of being universally accessible.

Nonetheless, the organization is already very accessible to the community on multiple levels. Its name uses Wokoma's father's indigenous Nigerian language and is anchored in a space created by his mother's family. This allows for multi-layered connections and invites people to bring their whole selves in. The homey, non-sterile ambiance diverges from standard gallery spaces' conventional harsh lighting and stark white walls. Sensorially, there's little room for overwhelm, with soft lighting and comfortable, quiet places to have a shared experience with neighbors. To further a sense of connection and belonging, they intentionally preserve the family home's character, creating space for dreaming and influencing others to join in with their whole community model and generational wealth creation. Concerning themselves with issues of economic and land justice, they see accessibility in the liberation of Black Trans Lives, by putting the invisibilized and marginalized community at the center of the conversation.

Figure 57 *Wa Na Wari House, 2022*
Source: Michelle Bacca

REFLECTION

The voluntary compliance component of ADA has rendered the act largely symbolic and effectively toothless. When public-owned properties aren't always fully compliant, what example does that leave small business owners struggling with other costs of business that are more heavily enforced? Oftentimes, the responsibility of accessibility is passed to small business tenants from their landlords and in the case of historic properties, maintenance costs may already be high. The ADA entrance exception for historic properties allows for the accessible entry to be separate from the main entry used by the public. In non-designated properties, the main entrance must, at a minimum, indicate the location of the accessible entrance only if it is not fully accessible itself, and this standard should extend to designated properties. Accessible wayfinding does not destroy historic integrity. Rather, it opens the experience of that integrity to more people who could benefit from it.

ADA's grievance procedure places the onus of reporting issues on disabled people rather than being accountable to them from the start. The ambiguous and reactive procedure is unsympathetic and has led to serial litigants finding a lack of compliance in both web design and physical barriers. In these cases, legal compliance is often left to the knowledge of municipality staff. Project Civic Access was launched by the DOJ in 1999 as a wide-ranging effort that involved comprehensive Title II reviews in all fifty states. This project, as well as the trends in litigation, seem to finally be getting the attention of public jurisdictions, who are starting to pay attention to a sect of the law that has been under-resourced despite its existence for several decades.

The ADA exemptions for historic properties are vague and subjective, prioritizing the biases of bureaucratic professionals and supposed financial and administrative burden over basic civil rights. An equitable enforcement of the ADA would be more proactive than the current grievance procedure. This would involve expanding current departments of construction and inspections to prioritize historic properties and parks that pose severe safety and civil rights risks to the public. There also needs to be a shift in focus toward accessibility and public belonging in civil departments outside of transportation and construction. Finally, it's critical to continue funding historic and

cultural preservation both within and outside of the landmarking bureaucracy and recognize it as a viable community healthcare strategy.

“If the public is to play a meaningful role in local government, it needs to be empowered. To be empowered, it needs to be convened.” (Beasley, 2019). Nonprofits like Byrd Barr Place, Wa Na Wari, and those that have found homes in Washington Hall are convening community and, in turn, responding to their needs. First AME and Powell Barnett Park have also become safe places for community to gather and have their spiritual and cultural needs realized. Planning processes must meet efforts like these in conversation around how to best shape communities within institutional regulations.

On the other hand, the anti-nomination for T.T. Minor’s landmarking demonstrates how local community needs can be overlooked in service of conflicting institutional goals. Feedback from one Landmarks Preservation Board member indicated they viewed renovations and upgrades to the site as erasing its history but applying a critical disability framework would favor building improvements that allow students more access to education, a process that should enhance significance. SPS has opportunities to work with the public to support public education; it is critical to involve the communities served in understanding their history and connection to place, their needs, and their input. Going beyond the question of preservation, the case of T.T. Minor becomes a commentary on how the government as a whole is functioning to serve its people. While policy windows provide opportunities for new projects and initiatives, the government shouldn’t move through them so hastily that it sacrifices bringing the community into the conversation.

There are many obstacles to designing and maintaining truly democratic public spaces. Odbert describes the public as “something acted upon, contested, questioned, and subject to change — and all too often exclusionary, inequitable, and unjust” (2022). Positing that the main barriers to successful public spaces are exclusion, unequal distribution, and qualitative disparity, real and urgent consequences are realized in the absence of quality public spaces that “promote mental and physical health, reduce morbidity and mortality, stimulate economic development, build environmental resilience, and create social infrastructure vital to our everyday lives.” Concluding that public spaces are essential for just, inclusive, and resilient communities, constraints in

political, geographic, and economic contexts can serve as “drivers of innovation and impact… on a timeline that meets the immediacy of the need” (Odbert, 2022).

Crawford broadens the definition of public by examining counterpublics like parking lots, front yards, and sidewalks as “venues of expression of new meanings.” An understanding of the democratic process, with its often frustrating and slow pace, can be realized in the every day such that it is no longer “preoccupied with loss but instead filled with possibility” (Crawford, 2013). In Influences of Anthropology in Urban Design, Denise Lawrence-Zuñiga posits that sanitization and exclusion take away from matters of place in an attempt at order; rather, ethnographic rituals “operate as important anchors for the local expression of identity and place attachment” (Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2012). Wa Na Wari demonstrates these concepts clearly, by showing that creativity can persist in the face of marginalization. The single-family home turned community art and historic preservation project captures everyday urbanist principles and creates a model for a new type of public space – in contrast to Midtown Square just a couple blocks away.

The case of Powell Barnett Park raises questions about the definition of landscape preservation. How can a living system fit into the rigid, architecture-focused definitions put forth by historic preservation policy and practice? Maisha Barnett’s decision to become a volunteer steward of the park named for her grandfather reaffirmed the legacy of the park. What would it look like today, had she not stepped in? She certainly has an influence on the city, but the park’s public ownership keeps ultimate control and decision-making out of her hands.

During an April 3, 2024 Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board meeting, a representative from Seattle Parks and Recreation opposed the nomination of one of their properties. Concerned about potential landmark controls, he indicated that Parks wants to maintain oversight of the maintenance of their many properties that are eligible for landmark nomination. The Board ultimately moved to approve the nomination but opposition from the Parks Department raises concern about whether vital cultural landscapes like Powell Barnett Park can be protected from the potential changing interests of the city.

The creation of dominant narratives through landmark designation has a profound effect on how future generations remember the past. The people deemed significant enough to profile in landmark nominations are typically aggrandized above the collective who visit and interpret the places that they were associated with. However, applying complex embodiment reveals that those significant people were embodied beings moving through and transforming the space, just as those who visit move through and transform the space themselves. Urban historian, architect, and poet, Dolores Hayden described *body memory* as "the shared experiences of dwellings, public spaces, and workplaces, and the paths traveled between home and work," which involves a social component "modified by the postures of gender, race, and class" (1995). Applying the nuance of critical disability theory to the work of preservation, urban design, and planning allows for full acknowledgment of real human experience in the creation of collective memory. When individuals visit heritage spaces that recognize all facets of the lived experiences there, it fosters a sense of belonging.

Disability histories don't have to be overt, as disability is a natural aspect of day to day experience. Washington Hall's disability history weaves through the people that have and continue to use the space, and was reinforced with its accessible renovation. Byrd Barr Place's mission to universally serve community has been ongoing for decades; its accessible design and staff's striving to constantly improve programming and outreach ensure accessibility will remain a priority. First AME serves the greater community, providing spiritual accessibility and social services. The history of T.T. Minor uncovers multiple examples of the mishandling of both disability and community outreach, providing valuable lessons on the exploitation of political process that could be applied toward more equitable outcomes. Powell Barnett Park is an important cultural landscape, allowing for the neighbors to coalesce and celebrate. Barnett himself was an advocate for diversity and was a celebrated community elder. Wa Na Wari grew out of a need to support disability and in turn became an essential community support, providing crucial community serves and creating a safe gathering space.

In the face of forced isolation from the rest of the city, people of African descent have fostered a rich and thriving history of Black resilience and belonging in Seattle's Central Area. For longtime residents, sub-neighborhood names like Squire Park, Cherry

Hill, Minor, Mann, and Garfield are clever real estate marketing tactics. To them, it is simply the CD, and those two letters encapsulate an abundant and valuable history that must not be lost to time. While the ADA is an important step toward more inclusive placemaking, true accessibility can't be defined in policy. Coming from a place of care, it is expansive, generous, unconstrained. It is preconceiving the needs of the community and being malleable when new needs arise. It is an understanding that every person deserves dignity and autonomy. It is life-affirming experiences in places that imbue cultural pride.

In her book Belonging: A Culture of Place, bell hooks reckons with her mother's Alzheimer's, likening the loss of memory to a way of dying (2008). "Time cannot be understood in any consistent linear way. Time converges on itself; days past fall easily into the present, and years collapse upon themselves. Faces, too, fall into forgetfulness, and relationships that were once all in all are indistinct shadows." Explaining that communities of care are sustained by rituals of regard, like family gatherings around a dinner table, hooks believed that new rituals of regard were needed for Mama, who had to be coaxed to come to eat at the table in her "new state of lost memory" (hooks, 2008). Memory care is a complex practice. I have presented the narratives of six memorable places with care, going beyond what could be found in their designation reports or through basic records searches. Care-full cultural preservation creates and supports memory and must be practiced generously. Universal and holistic access are essential for a thriving community and the disability histories of the presented cases demonstrate how access is multi-facetted, essential, and life-affirming.

The Central Area has been a place where I've found peace, belonging, and connection. Becoming an active participant in my community has given me a sense of ease. I see familiar faces as I walk to work or my bus stop, and that body memory has transformed me and provided purpose.

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