

**SEATTLE CENTER:**

Exploring ways to document, designate and reactivate the Modern era  
exposition site as a historic district

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**ABSTRACT**

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Associate Professor, Manish Chalana, MArch, MLA, PhD

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Significant Modern era spaces are inspiring sites that embrace the science and technologies of the mid-century. These sites directly reflect these characteristics through their site layouts and universal design principles, but often go unnoticed and unappreciated. Modern era sites can once again be successful through documentation, preservation and reactivation. To explore this concept this thesis focuses on an excellent example of Pacific Northwest Modern era design, the Seattle Center. This site has its own set of challenges with both preserving the site and integrating the campus within the urban neighborhood that surrounds it. The best approach to addressing these issues is a two-step process: 1) obtaining historic designation through a holistic approach as a historic district and 2) moving beyond designation and reactivating the site through design interventions; Preserve + Reactivate.

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my Mom, Dad and friends who have always supported me in my academic and life aspirations whether it be building a licorice site model, hiking a mountain or moving across the country to pursue a graduate degree.

## **PREFACE**

Over the course of my studies in the urban planning program three courses built a foundation for this thesis. Two of these courses were in Spring 2014; American Urban History taught by Manish Chalana and the Uptown: Seattle Studio taught by David Blum. In American Urban History I focused on studying the importance of the integration of current-day Seattle Center into the Uptown Neighborhood while retaining the historic integrity of the Century 21 Exposition layout. In the Uptown: Seattle Studio as a class we developed an analysis report to be used by the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development to assist with the creation of an Urban Design Framework for the Uptown neighborhood. The third course that contributed to this thesis is the Historic Preservation Implementation course that I took in Spring 2015 taught by Jennifer Meisner and Holly Taylor. As part of this course I developed a short form submittal for the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) 2015 Challenge in which the theme was documenting modernist landscapes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Modern Movement encompasses a unique time when there was a shift in design from traditional values, beliefs and practices that were heavily influenced by historical styles to a new set of principles expressive of “modern age” technologies and science,<sup>1</sup> yet to many it still feels as if it is part of the very recent past and not always worthy of historic designation.<sup>2</sup> The design from this era was produced by several pioneer Modern era designers and in the U.S. it was heavily influenced by a nation wide shift from centralized to low-density development.<sup>3</sup>

Lack of widespread appreciation is only one of the challenges of preserving Modern era work. Often the integrity of Modern era sites is called into question rendering it difficult to obtain historic designation. This can be caused by deterioration of the site due to lack of maintenance impacting the historic integrity. This thesis introduces the importance of preserving Modern era sites and discusses the issues surrounding their preservation. The thesis then illustrates how these challenges can be addressed for a specific local Modern era site, Seattle Center, through a two step approach: 1) obtaining historic designation through a holistic approach as a historic district and 2) moving beyond designation and reactivating the site through design interventions; Preserve + Reactivate.

The Seattle Center, formally the site of the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair, is an example of a significant Modern era work in terms of its’ site layout, landscape and architecture, but it has its own set of issues with integrating into the surrounding urban context.<sup>4</sup> This is mostly due to its Modern era layout and location in an urban neighborhood separated

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1 “Modernism 101,” Docomomo Wewa, accessed Oct. 22, 2014, <http://www.docomomo-wewa.org>. (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDxxJplg>)

2 Lane, “Pride and Prejudice: Preserving Midcentury Modern Heritage.”

3 Longstreth, “The Last Landscape.”

4 Edward E. Carlson, *Seattle World’s Fair 1962*, (Seattle, WA: Acme Publications, 1961).

from the downtown of Seattle. Without designation the Seattle Center runs the risk of having unsympathetic alterations occurring to significant buildings and spaces and without reactivation of its edges it runs the risk of not serving the neighborhood in which it sits. By illustrating how this two-step process applies to the Seattle Center we can learn how best to approach preservation and reactivation of the campus as a whole.

### *Methodology*

To approach this thesis I first compiled a literature review on mid-century Modern era design and discussed some of the reasons that Modern era sites are often at risk of either being destroyed or altered to the point their historic integrity is lost. After this review I proposed that in order to address these issues at a specific local site, Seattle Center, there needs to be a two step process to help prevent it from being destroyed or altered by first obtaining historic district designation and second by moving beyond designation and reactivating through design interventions.

Using Seattle Center as a case study, first I described its role and influence in terms of being a World's Fair site. Then I described the evolution of the site from pre-Seattle World's Fair (1962) to the Seattle World's Fair to its current condition as the Seattle Center. This included researching the original design and layout through the current Century 21 Masterplan. In addition, the surrounding context of the Seattle Center, Uptown, is a crucial piece of addressing the issues within the Seattle Center, so an analysis of the Uptown neighborhood needed to be completed. In Spring 2014 I participated in the University of Washington Seattle Studio in which the final product was the *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report*. The studio report provided a starting point for the analysis of the current conditions of Uptown and identified ideal areas of intervention to respond to challenges facing the neighborhood, such as pedestrian connectivity. This report was presented to the City of Seattle Department of Planning

and Development (DPD) to be used toward the completed Uptown Urban Design Framework (UDF). The completed UDF will be used as a guide for future development within the neighborhood, making it a crucial piece to consider when reactivating the Seattle Center.

After understanding the sites' evolution the next step was to apply the two step approach, Preserve + Reactivate. For the first step I referred to the recently published *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study* by Artifacts Architectural Consulting, Inc. in 2013 to make the recommendation that Seattle Center should be designated as a historic district in order to preserve it. Next I applied the second step, Reactivate, first by identifying overlap between concentration areas of contributing spaces of the proposed historic district and the identified areas of intervention in the *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report*. The overlapping analysis produced two key edge areas that would be ideal for design interventions; the Northwest Rooms and Mercer Street Parking Garage. I analyzed the current intervention occurring at the Northwest Rooms within Seattle Center to see how the process and outcome could have been different or similar under the historic district designation. Then I explored a possible future design intervention that could occur at the Mercer Street Parking Garage site with the premise of Seattle Center being a designated historic district. After completing the case study analysis I reflected on the value of the two-step approach.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of this literature review was to define Modern era sites, explain the importance of preserving works from the Modern Movement and to discuss the challenges associated with preserving Modern era designs.

### MODERN ERA DESIGN

#### *Defining Modern era Sites*

Various historians and preservationists in the U.S. define the period of Modern era design lasting from just before or after World War II through the mid-1970s. Modern era design was heavily influenced by the new technologies and science of the modern or machine age.<sup>5</sup> There were several principles that characterize the design styles of this era such as 'architecture as volume', which focuses on building volume versus building mass that could be expressed by a building with a recessed ground level typically with large paneled windows (Figure 1). Other principles include regularity in structural ordering such as with openings or windows and lack of applied decoration (Figures 2, 3).<sup>6</sup> In terms of planning and site layout there was a dramatic switch from centralized and dense development to low-density development heavily influenced by the automobile.<sup>7</sup> Many Modern era landscape architecture sites use space as a unifying medium and do not rely heavily on historic styles.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Modern era landscape architecture often incorporates large amounts of hardscaping, respond to regional environments<sup>9</sup> and encourage people to be participants rather than be spectators

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5 "Modernism 101." and *The 2002 Wave Hill Charter On the Preservation of Modern Landscape Architecture*.

6 "Modernism 101."

7 Longstreth, "The Last Landscape."

8 Walker and Simo, *Invisible Gardens : The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*.

9 National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, "2015 HALS Challenge: Documenting Modern era Landscapes."



Left: Figure 1: Key Arena - Architecture As Volume; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Key Arena*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 2: Mercer Street Parking Garage: Regularity of Structural Ordering; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Mercer St. Parking Garage*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 3: Cornish Playhouse Corner of Mercer St. & 2nd Ave. - Lack of Applied Decoration; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Cornish Playhouse*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7,

within the landscape.<sup>10</sup> For example Freeway Park in Seattle designed by Modern era landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin, uses concrete as a unifying medium throughout the site creating a heavily hardscaped park that is an abstracted interpretation of the city's topography (Figure 4).<sup>11</sup> The water feature drowns out the sound of the freeway below allowing users to be immersed in the immediate surroundings of the park.

10 Walker, *Invisible Gardens*.

11 "Freeway Park," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://tclf.org/landscapes/freeway-park>. (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDyGz22i>)



Figure 4: Freeway Park; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Freeway Park*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: April 19, 2015.

## AT-RISK MODERN ERA BUILDINGS & SITES

### *Why preserve Modern era design?*

There are several key contributing factors to the significance of Modern era design: 1) during the time period from post World War II through the mid-1970s several pioneer Modern era designers emerged to produce notable works, 2) during this period the U.S. saw a dramatic change in settlement patterns in the form of low-density and decentralized development,<sup>12</sup> and 3) principles expressed in Modern era works reflect new styles of design influenced by a “new age” and break away from classical and traditional design styles.<sup>13</sup>

### *Challenges with preserving Modern era design*

Several aspects of Modern era design pose difficulties to preserving these works, such as 1) difficulty obtaining historic designation, 2) lack of widespread appreciation and 3) historic integrity impacted by deterioration, maintenance and alterations. Modern era sites run into challenges when it comes to both obtaining historic designation and

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12 Longstreth, “The Last Landscape.”

13 “Modernism 101.”

being appreciated by the greater public as sites that needs to be preserved. According to Longstreth, pieces of the environment that have recently been built are often the first to be critiqued and suggested to be done again.<sup>14</sup> This falls into the broader category of struggles with preserving the recent past, not just Modern era designs.

When it comes to designation this poses a critical issue, a Modern era site may not be old enough to warrant recognition according to certain age requirements. Although the criteria for designation of a historical property are similar between the city, state, and national levels, the age requirement of the property can vary. This is most prominent at the national level where criteria to be considered for listing on the National Register requires a property to have achieved significance prior to 50 years ago.<sup>15</sup> While in 1979 the National Park Service (NPS) released a Bulletin describing “properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years” can be eligible for the National Register as long as some passage of time has occurred, properties that are younger than 50 years are not often listed.<sup>16</sup> This is clearly evident in the fact that a little over 2,100 properties listed on the National Register are less than 50 years old, only a little over 3% of all listed properties.<sup>17</sup> At the state and local levels the age requirement varies, but for the City of Seattle, a historic property that meets all the designation criteria only needs to be 25 years old,<sup>18</sup> while at the state level in Washington it needs to be 50 years old.<sup>19</sup>

Lack of widespread appreciation by the greater public is also a challenge that faces many at-risk Modern era sites partially due to the question of whether the heritage of

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14 Longstreth, “The Last Landscape.”

15 U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Brochure: The National Register of Historic Places.”

16 Bronson and Jester, “Conserving the Built Heritage of the Modern era: Recent Developments and Ongoing Challenges.”

17 Ibid.

18 *Seattle Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.*

19 Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, “Washington Heritage Register.”

Modern era design is worthy of protection.<sup>20</sup> Out of this lack of widespread appreciation has come a need for awareness and advocacy for Modern era design. Now there are several efforts towards improving the awareness of the importance to preserve Modern era structures including the “Principles for the Conservation and Enhancement of the Architectural Heritage of the Twentieth Century” that was adopted in 1991 to address identification, protection, management, conservation, and awareness of recent resources.<sup>21</sup>

In addition there are several advocacy organizations working towards the same goal, such as Docomomo International, the International committee for documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the modern movement established in 1988. Today there are 59 chapters in the world representing various countries with the mission to exchange ideas and foster interest in the Modern Movement as well as act as a watchdog when significant Modern era sites are at-risk.<sup>22</sup> One of these chapters is Docomomo US<sup>23</sup> and a sub-chapter is Docomomo Western Washington (Docomomo Wewa).<sup>24</sup> Currently, Docomomo Wewa in partnership with the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP) is leading an effort to recognize and record mid-century modern resources called the *Nifty from the Last 50 Initiative*. This initiative was inspired by the underrepresented number of post WWII Washington resources listed on the National Register (Figure 5).

In addition lack of widespread appreciation ongoing challenges involved in preserving sites of the recent past include integrity and sustainability. Recent built heritage resources suffer from frequent incongruous adaptations and are generally built for

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20 Bronson and Jester, “Conserving the Built Heritage of the Modern era.”

21 Ibid.

22 “Mission,” Docomomo International, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.docomomo.com/mission>.

23 “About,” Docomomo US, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.docomomo-us.org/about>. (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDyRCbgk>)

24 “Modernism 101.”

## National Register Nominations By Built Date

**Trend:** Drastically decreasing number of post WWII listing. Shows the need to focus on listing post WWII resources before they are lost.

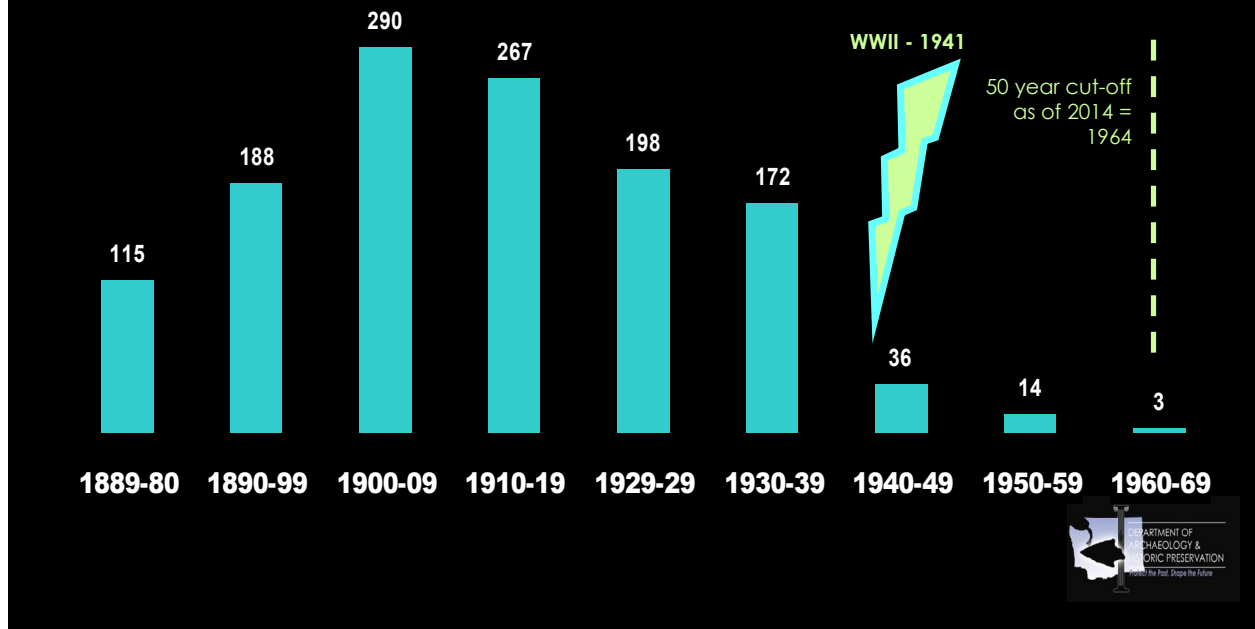


Figure 5: National Register Nominations By Built Date by DAHP; Source: Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. "National Register Nominations By Built Date." National Register Nominations. Washington: Washington State DAHP, 2014.

a shorter lifespan. Also, often economically viable conservation solutions are not as apparent as they might be for traditional historic buildings not from the recent past.<sup>25</sup>

These same issues were also raised in the 1995 conference on Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture in Wave Hill, where preservation and landscape architecture professionals gathered at a conference to discuss the lack of recognition of Modern era landscape architecture. This conference was followed by two publications, *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible* in 1999 and a follow up in 2004 *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture II*, both containing

<sup>25</sup> Bronson and Jester, "Conserving the Built Heritage of the Modern era."

papers from design and preservation professionals discussing the issues, importance, and strategies around preserving Modern era landscape architecture.<sup>26</sup> The conference and papers have inspired some progress in the designation of Modern era landscapes such as the first landscape architecture National Historic Landmark (NHL) of General Motors Technical Center in Warren, MI. Still many landscape sites of the recent past are “at-risk” of being destroyed partly due to lack of designation.<sup>27</sup> At the conference it was suggested that this “at-risk” vulnerability and ultimately the destruction of Modern era sites was the result of lack of sympathy, maintenance and physical neglect. Other contributing factors to the destruction of Modern era sites are, “...unsympathetic alterations, the degradation of context, and the development of a social situation that leads society as an effort to eradicate the perceived problem.”<sup>28</sup>

#### *Case Example: Lincoln Center, NYC*

These same issues have been discussed in recent conversations about preserving the Lincoln Center, a Modern era performing arts complex located on the West Side of Manhattan. The design of the Lincoln Center is “...formal, boxy, set on a podium, and altogether indifferent to the streets of New York.”<sup>29</sup> The podiums allowed for parking garages underneath the buildings and the site as whole was influenced by the idea that, “...the best way to save the city was to suburbanize it.”<sup>30</sup> The complex produced the desired effect of urban-renewal according to Robert Moses by gentrifying the surrounding area, but today it is stagnant and less vibrant than the neighborhood that surrounds it. Unless there is a performance occurring there is little or no reason to go to the Lincoln Center.<sup>31</sup>

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26 Birnbaum, “Moving Beyond the Picturesque and Making Postwar Landscape Architecture Visible.”

27 Ibid.

28 Olin, “Preserve Some, Yes, But Also Improve, Add To, and Let Some Go.”

29 Goldberger, “West Side Fixer-Upper: New Ideas for Lincoln Center That Don’t Involve Dynamite.”

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

In the 90's the need to reactivate Lincoln Center was recognized and in 1999 architects Beyer Blinder Belle began a study to evaluate how to improve the Center. This led to several design proposals by renowned architecture firm, Diller Scofidio + Renfro. These included a vast umbrella structure that would cover the plaza area, replacing Damrosch Park with a landscaped hill and carving out a portion of the main plaza to install an elevator platform and performance stage. They also proposed ramps that would lead from street level on 65th Street up to the plaza lined with a grid of trees softening the hardscaping. Diller Scofidio + Renfro claimed their designs attempt to incorporate the fundamental qualities of the existing architecture while modifying and adapting the podium to better serve the City. The key piece to the reactivation of the site, "...is to know the difference between the parts of it that always worked and may simply be out of fashion, and the parts of it that don't work at all and have to be fixed."<sup>32</sup>

While the proposals of the Lincoln Center seemed ideal from a reactivation standpoint many preservationists were concerned that the proposals would change Lincoln Center too much.<sup>33</sup> A proposal to make Lincoln Center was presented to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2005, but was declined<sup>34</sup> and it still has not achieved landmark status,<sup>35</sup> therefore there are no Landmarks Commission regulations associated with changes to the site. The north plaza originally designed by Modern era landscape architect, Dan Kiley, was completely replaced in the early 2000s (Figures 6, 7). Many preservationists are concerned that Damrosch Park in the Center also designed by Dan Kiley could fall to the same fate if new plans proposed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro are completed. Docomomo New York/Tri-State chairwoman, Nina Rappaport, said, 'It feels like they're just chipping away at pieces of the Lincoln

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32 Goldberger, "West Side Fixer-Upper: New Ideas for Lincoln Center That Don't Involve Dynamite."

33 Pogrebin, "When Renovation Meets Redo: Preservationists View Lincoln Center Renovations With Alarm."

34 Ibid.

35 "NYCityMap," NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, accessed June 8, 2015, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/home/home.shtml>. (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDyZR120>)



Figure 6: Reflecting Pool & North Plaza at Lincoln Center designed by Dan Kiley; Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation. "Modern-Era Dan Kiley Landscape Threatened at Lincoln Center." LANDSLIDE: Lost. Lincoln Center, New York, NY, 2005.

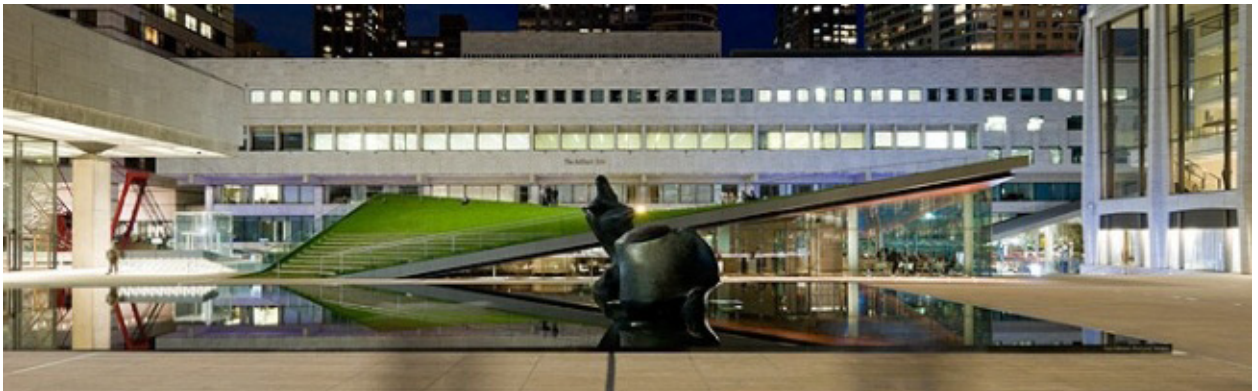


Figure 7: Reflecting Pool & North Plaza at Lincoln Center designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Source: "Landscape - Roof Form Relations." Lincoln Center, New York, NY, 2011, <https://withstringattached.wordpress.com/2011/02/17/landscape-roof-form-relations>. (used without permission)

Center.<sup>36</sup> In addition they are not considering the site in a holistic approach as it was designed; one scheme with several contributing architects and landscape architects.<sup>37</sup> As demonstrated with the north plaza of the Lincoln Center there is great risk to Modern era designs being replaced or significantly altered without historic designation with regulations. In addition, if the site as a whole is not designated it runs the risk of disrupting the overall integrity of the site, which is significant to the site since it was designed collectively.

36 Pogrebin, "When Renovation Meets Redo"

37 Ibid.

### *Lessons Learned*

Several lessons can be drawn from this Literature Review. If Modern era sites are not designated with some form of regulations attached to them they run the risk of being demolished or significantly altered impacting their integrity. On the other hand Modern era campuses typically have several challenges that are directly related to a sites design language. These elements include: 1) decentralized campus layouts, 2) lack of pedestrian scale structures and/or large boxy buildings, 3) lack of street activation at the pedestrian level and 4) uninviting hardscaping of spaces.

### III. Preserve + Reactivate

#### *Approach: Preserve + Reactivate*

The Seattle Center site can address the challenges associated with Modern era sites discussed in the preceding Literature Review by two steps: 1) obtaining historic district designation and 2) moving beyond designation and reactivating the site through design interventions; Preserve + Reactivate.

#### *Selected Case Study: Seattle Center*

As the Seattle Center campus was originally constructed as part of the 1962 World's Fair the remaining components and overall layout fall within the Modern era time period. The many buildings and structures of the campus reflect utilitarian architectural styles and the overall layout of the site is a decentralized campus.

The Seattle Center reflects key aspects of Modern era design, first the primary planner and architect was Paul Thiry, a notably Modern era designer recognized as introducing Modern era design to Seattle and the Pacific Northwest.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, the layout of the Seattle Center is an example of a decentralized development pattern juxtaposed to the urban context that it lies within. And lastly, the style of the structures and layout of the campus express specific design principles of the Modern era.

Although this is a significant piece of Seattle's history, the campus as a whole has only recently turned 50 years old making it eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register. In addition, there is only a scattering of City of Seattle Landmarks that are designated within the campus. These include the Space Needle, Seattle Center House (Armory), Pacific Science Center, Seattle Monorail, Kobe Bell and Horiuchi Mural.<sup>39</sup> The

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38 "Paul Thiry (1904-1993)."

39 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*, 13.

site has the same risks associated with it as other works of the recent past; not being appreciated for its' design style by the general public, deterioration of its' structures and being thought of as too young to have gained its own history making it worthy of designation on the National Register.

In addition the Seattle Center has another set of issues with serving residents of the adjacent neighborhood due to its Modern era style and layout as pointed out by Jacyln Gault in *Blurring Edges: Connecting the Seattle Center to Surrounding Neighborhoods* in 2010. The layout of the campus is more conducive to internally focused events rather than activities that bring in surrounding residents. Gault proposes that if the edges of the Seattle Center were blurred between the Center itself and the surrounding neighborhood that it would improve connections and become a true asset serving the community.<sup>40</sup> Taking this identified issue into account the following case study explores how the two step approach, Preserve + Reactivate, could be applied to this specific site.

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40 Jacyln Gault, "Blurring Edges: Connecting the Seattle Center to Surrounding Neighborhoods." (master's thesis, University of Washington, 2010), 1.

#### IV. Case Study: Seattle Center



Figure 8: Context Diagram - Seattle Center within Uptown Neighborhood; Sources: City of Seattle GIS Data, "Parcel Boundaries Delineated by King County & Parklands & Green Space." and *Uptown Urban Design Framework Background Report.*; Diagram: Katie O'Lone

#### *Site Introduction*

The Century 21 Exposition or the 1962 Seattle World's Fair site, now known as the Seattle Center is a Modern era site. The design of the site and its structures were intentionally constructed to be used as a permanent civic center for the City after the close of the World's Fair in October of 1962.<sup>41</sup> While the site excels at providing a hub and space for large expositions and events, it is not well-integrated into the surrounding neighborhood. The Center's Modern era buildings turn their backs to the neighborhood. In addition the expansive parking garages and lots create uninviting pedestrian entries that do not encourage visitors to step foot in the surrounding urban context. Currently the Seattle Center is located within the Uptown neighborhood and comprises 74 acres

41 Edward E. Carlson, *Seattle World's Fair 1962*, (Seattle, WA: Acme Publications, 1961).

or approximately one quarter of the 297-acre neighborhood (Figure 8).<sup>42</sup>

The Uptown neighborhood has also been designated as an Urban Center by both the Seattle and King County's Comprehensive Plans. This designation recognizes that the Uptown neighborhood has the potential to be a future location of job and housing growth of regional significance as the City's population increases.<sup>43</sup> With the Urban Center designation the Seattle Center should be helping activate the neighborhood.

## CITIES & WORLD'S FAIRS

The remnants of World's Fairs exist within many American cities and throughout the world. Many of the monumental pieces of architecture have become iconic symbols of the city. When thinking of Paris one would likely picture the Eiffel Tower constructed for the 1889 Exposition Universelle. In Montreal the Biosphere or geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller and Shoji Sadao is a well-known landmark of the City remaining from Expo '67. While the original Ferris wheel from the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago no longer exists the modern-day replica located on Navy Pier is a renowned symbol of the City (Figure 9). As Marilyn Gardner, a Navy Pier public relations staff person claimed, "Because the first Ferris wheel was designed for Chicago, our wheel has become an icon for the city."<sup>44</sup> Just as in these cities, Seattle's World's Fair or the Century 21 Exposition in 1962 left a significant imprint on its' urban fabric in both its' campus site layout and its' still infamous architectural element; the Space Needle (Figure 10). While during the World's Fair over 2.3 million people visited the Space Needle, today over 1 million people still visit the Space Needle each year.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Downtown Seattle Association, and Metropolitan Improvement District, "Uptown 2012 Neighborhood Profile," and "Uptown Urban Design Framework Background Report."

43 City of Seattle DPD, Uptown UDF Background Report.

44 Katie O'Lone, "Seattle's 1962 World's Fair & Modern-Day Uptown Neighborhood." (American Urban History final research paper, University of Washington, 2014), 2-3.

45 Ibid.



Figure 9 (Far Left): Navy Pier Ferris Wheel, Source: "Navy Pier Ferris Wheel," Photograph, 2012, *Navy Pier Chicago*, accessed June 1, 2014. (used without permission)

Figure 10: Space Needle, Source: Clarence E. Voiland, "Space Needle, with Bell System Pavilion at base; view E," Photograph, 1962, *Century 21 Digital Collection, The Seattle Public Library*, accessed June 1, 2014.

## SITE EVOLUTION

### *The Site: Pre-Century 21 Exposition*

The current day site of the Seattle Center was originally part of the David and Louisa Boren Denny's 1853 donation land claim that by the late 19th century was platted and developed into an urban neighborhood. Two neighborhood amenities introduced to the area in the early 20th century were the Warren Avenue School and Mercer Playground. Although it would end up being several decades until a civic center for the City was actually implemented, the "Plan of Seattle" by Virgil Bogue originally introduced the idea in 1911 identifying this area, Lower Queen Anne (now known as Uptown) as the ideal area for a civic center. The Bogue plan was ultimately rejected.<sup>46</sup>

From 1927-1928 the City took the first steps to implement civic structures in the Lower Queen Anne area. This cluster of structures was built in a four-block area bounded by Mercer and Harrison Streets and Third and Fourth Avenues North. The structures included in the four-block area were a Civic Auditorium/Exposition Hall, a Civic Ice

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46 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

Arena, a Civic outdoor Field (later replaced by a stadium for the Seattle Public Schools in 1947) and a Veterans of Foreign Wars facility. This four-block area was adjacent to two already-built neighborhood public amenities, the Warren Avenue School and Mercer Playground. Combined this comprised six-blocks of the future 13-block Century 21 Exposition site. This area began to act as a civic core for the City drawing in residents from outside the Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. A little over ten years later in 1939 a field armory was built by the Washington National Guard between the streets of Harrison Street, Thomas Street, Nob Hill Avenue and Third Avenue. Already by this time a total of seven of the future 13-block Century 21 Exposition site were in public use.<sup>47</sup>

By the 40's the civic buildings were no longer meeting the needs of the community and in 1946 the Seattle Civic Arts Committee recommended to Seattle Mayor William F. Devin that a civic center should be created with land adjacent to the pre-existing civic buildings and armory. While there was support the city was not able to acquire the land. In 1954 these efforts were resurrected when Seattle Mayor Allen Pomeroy created a committee to work towards creating a civic center for the City. One year later a group of Seattleites proposed the idea of creating a world's fair and the Washington World's Fair Commission was formed lead by Edward Carlson.<sup>48</sup>

### *The Site: Century 21 Exposition*

Together the World's Fair Commission and Civic Center Committee appointed by the Mayor decided that the goals of both organizations could be met by first using the site for the World's Fair and then as a permanent civic center. It was also determined that the best site for a civic center would be the area where several buildings were already

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47 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

48 Ibid.

used as civic amenities in Lower Queen Anne.<sup>49</sup> The site was also selected for its proximity to downtown.<sup>50</sup>

By the 50's the surrounding neighborhood began to be filled with small commercial enterprises and homes tended to be rented versus owner-occupied.<sup>51</sup> The idea of the civic center was presented as “the transformation of a semi-blighted area into an attractive downtown civic center and park that would heavily increase the surrounding property values, a contribution not only to the beauty of the city, but a solid contribution to increased tax receipts for the city.”<sup>52</sup> In a letter to the city’s residents the 1962 Mayor Gordon S. Clinton stated that 90% of the buildings were intended to be permanent and used in the future as a major civic center that could host national political conventions, theater productions, operas, trade fairs, and major sports events.<sup>53</sup> In November of 1956, a \$7.5 million bond was passed by voters to build the civic center for the World’s Fair that would eventually become what we know as today’s Seattle Center.<sup>54</sup>

Memorial Stadium and the Armory were leased for the duration of the fair and incorporated into the site design, while the Warren Avenue School and Mercer Playground and 200 other structures were demolished. The original street grid was mostly maintained and used as pedestrian avenues for the site. Architect Clayton Young was hired jointly by the Washington World’s Fair Commission and the Civic Center Commission to oversee the site development with the idea in mind that it would be used as a civic center after the fair.<sup>55</sup>

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49 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

50 “World Fair Corporation Fact Sheet No. 1: Why a World Fair?” (1958).

51 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

52 “World Fair Corporation Fact Sheet No. 1: Why a World Fair?” (1958).

53 Carlson, *Seattle World’s Fair 1962*.

54 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

55 Ibid.

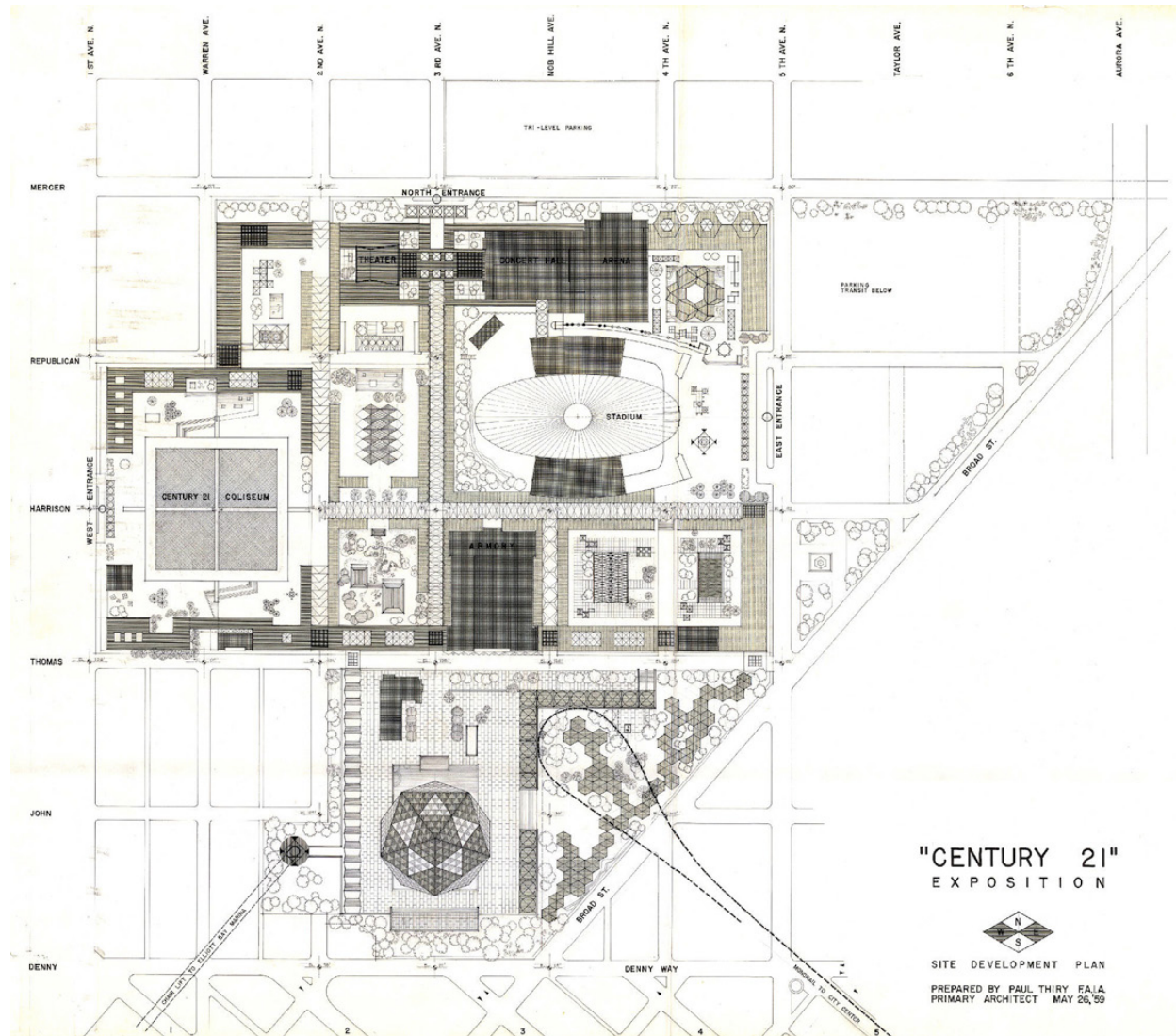


Figure 11: Century 21 Exposition (Seattle, WA), proposed site plan; Architect: Thiry, Paul; Source: Thiry, Paul. "Century 21 Exposition: Site Development Plan." Architectural Drawing, May 26, 1959. Paul Thiry Collection. <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ac/id/1284/rec/180>.

In 1958, Paul Thiry referred to as the father of modernism in Washington was hired as the primary planner and architect of the Century 21 Exposition by Clayton Young (Figure 11). In addition to the master plan he designed several buildings: the Key Arena, NASA Building, Seattle Center Pavilion, Northwest Rooms and West Coast Building.<sup>56</sup> Other well-known Modern era designers were involved in the creation of the World's Fair site through a voluntary Design Standards Advisory Board. The Board was comprised of several Washington architects: Perry Johanson, John Detlie, Robert

56 Michael Houser, State Architectural Historian, "Paul Thiry Project List," (2013).

Deitz, and Paul Thiry, as well as John Spaeth, Seattle's Planning Commission Director at the time.<sup>57</sup> Two well known Modern era designers that also joined the Board were architect Minoru Yamasaki, designer of the New York World Trade Center, notable Seattle building, Rainier Tower and the Pacific Science Center arches at the Seattle Center,<sup>58</sup> and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, designer of Lovejoy Plaza in Portland and Seattle's Freeway Park.<sup>59</sup>

The design of the World's Fair structures and site layout were clearly representative of the Modern era design. Similar to how the World's Fair reflected the newfound space age and innovative technologies, the Modern era design movement believed that science and new technologies would produce, "a genuine 'modern age' architecture of universal principles." Many of these Modern era design principles are apparent in Thiry's Century 21 Exposition design: 1) architecture of volume, which strived to maximize the flexibility of a space, 2) regularity in the structural ordering of a built work, 3) avoidance of applied decoration and 4) a decentralized site layout (Figures 1, 2, 3).<sup>60</sup> In his plan it is also apparent to how the pre-existing street grid is pulled through the site to be used for pedestrian travel within the fairgrounds.

### *The World's Fair*

Officially known as the Century 21 Exposition, Seattle's World's Fair held in 1962 embraced new technologies and the machine age (Figures 12, 13).<sup>61</sup> The Fair opened on April 21st and had drawn over 9,600,000 people by the time it closed in on October 21st, 1962.<sup>62</sup> The Fair was divided into five major themes: World of Science, World of

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57 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

58 Bhatt, "UW Plans 50-Story Tower on Downtown Block."

59 Meyer, "Biography of Lawrence Halprin: 1916-2009."

60 "Modernism 101."

61 *Official Guide Book Seattle World's Fair 1962*.

62 Needham & Grohmann, Inc., "A Comprehensive Survey of the Seattle World's Fair 1962."

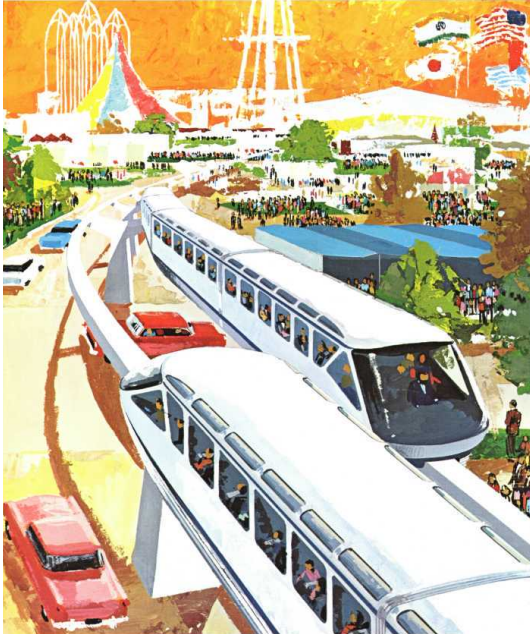


Figure 12: Monorail; Sources: *Official Guide Book Seattle World's Fair 1962*.



Figure 13: Washington State Coliseum; Sources: *Official Guide Book Seattle World's Fair 1962*.

Century 21, World of Commerce and Industry, World of Entertainment, and World of Art. These areas drove the site design of the Fair. Each theme had its own area within the fairgrounds connected by the Boulevards of the World (Figure 14).<sup>63</sup>

The various exhibits also centered on the idea of new technologies, science, and the promise of the space age. The U.S. Science Pavilion contained the Spacearium, a simulated ride through space, while the Washington State Coliseum hosted the exhibit of how man would live in the 21st century. The Commerce and Industry exhibit displayed the most innovative creations of the time, such as the cordless telephone, and predictions of future inventions. In addition forty different nations provided International exhibits and the Fine Arts Exhibit displayed extensive artwork including Northwest Coast Native Artwork. Other Fair highlights included the Boulevards of the World containing multiple shops and crafts, the Gayway with its many rides, and the Space Needle, at the time the tallest structure west of the Mississippi. In addition the

<sup>63</sup> *Official Guide Book Seattle World's Fair, 2.*



Figure 14: Seattle World's Fair Map; Source: Official Cartographer to Seattle World's Fair, "The Seattle World's Fair."

Monorail demonstrated the future of mass transit moving 10,000 passengers an hour from downtown Seattle to the World's Fair.<sup>64</sup>

### *The Site: Post-Century 21 Exposition*

Once the fair ended temporary buildings were demolished and the Memorial Stadium lease ended and went back to the Seattle Public Schools control, while the Armory lease was extended and the building eventually bought by the City. Some structures

64 "Trip to the Fair" Information Sheet, (1962)

such as the Coliseum, Playhouse, and Opera House were designed to serve the Civic Center after the fair, while other structures were selected to be maintained due to their architectural significance such as the Science Pavilion and Space Needle. Some smaller temporary structures were also maintained to serve future programming within the Civic Center.<sup>65</sup>

Due to its' campus-style layout and the fact that the entrance to the World's Fair was regulated the structures from the World's Fair turned their back to the surrounding Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. While the layout provides a well-used space for large events the enormous buildings, unless a museum, sit idle at most times of the year due to their unspecific programming. The lack of decoration and utilitarian style structures create large uninviting walls around the site. And while the monorail provided a mass transit option to travel to the Fair the site layout incorporated the era's auto-centric ideals. The massive two-block 1,500 car garage on Mercer Street was implemented at the time to accommodate fairgoers arriving by car.<sup>66</sup> The garage included a skywalk that funneled motorists directly into the fairgrounds. Efforts to open up the Seattle Center to its' surroundings have occurred over the past several decades. In 1989 the Domestic Commerce and Industry Building was demolished and replaced with the Broad Street Green opening up this edge of the campus.<sup>67</sup>

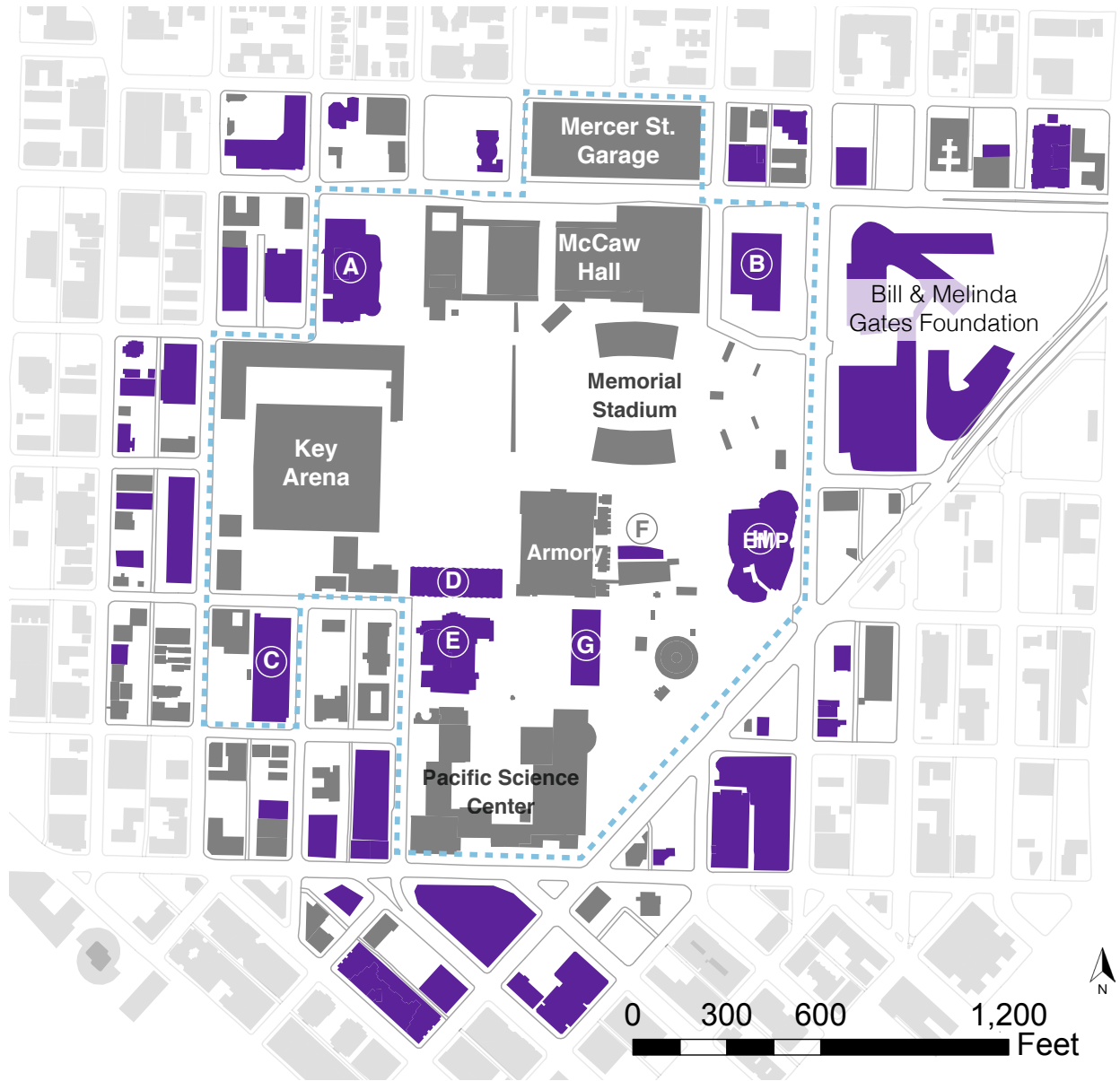
Since the end of the World's Fair several structures have been added to the Seattle Center campus, such as the Seattle Children's Theatre, the Skate Park, Vera Project, Experience Music Project (EMP), and Chihuly Garden and Glass museum. While the site continues to change and adopt to meet the needs of City residents, the City struggles with the balance between historic preservation and encouraging new growth within the Center.

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65 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.

66 "Century 21 World's Fair."

67 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*.



Legend		
	Building Age - Post 1962	(B) KCTS (1986)
	Building Age - 1962 or Earlier	(F) Next 50 Pavillion (2012)
	Seattle Center Boundary	(C) 1st Ave. N. Parking Garage (1998)
(A)	Seattle Repertory Theatre (1966)	(G) Chihuly Gardens and Glass (2012)
(D)	Fisher Pavilion (2002)	(H) Experience Music Project (EMP) (1999)
(E)	Seattle Children's Theatre (1993)	

Figure 15: Age of Seattle Center & Surrounding Buildings; Sources: City of Seattle GIS Data, "Parcel Boundaries Delineated by King County & Parklands & Green Space." and KCGIS Center, "King County Parcel Viewer."; Diagram: Katie O'Lone

### *The Site: Today*

Today the Seattle Center attracts 12 million visitors each year and comprises a quarter of the Uptown neighborhood having significant impacts on the surrounding community.<sup>68</sup> Many of the buildings constructed for the World's Fair are still standing in the Seattle Center today, with a few exceptions (Figure 15). Figure 15 also shows that the surrounding neighborhood continues to change since the World's Fair of 1962 with many new buildings being constructed around the adjacent block to the Seattle Center including another large institutional use, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Seattle Center provides a plethora of activity hosting over 5,000 events each year. These events provide sporadic bursts of energy during various festivals such as Folklife, Bite of Seattle, PrideFest and Bumbershoot each attracting large crowds to the Center. Some of the major permanent elements are the Seattle Opera, Northwest Ballet, and the Children's Museum. The Center School, a small public high school is located in the Armory on the site as well as the High School Memorial Stadium owned and operated by the Seattle School District for athletic events. In addition, several privately owned structures are part of the Seattle Center. These include the Space Needle, Pacific Science Center, EMP, and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame.<sup>69</sup>

Whether local or from outside King County, visitors of the Seattle Center tend to visit for a specific event or activity. This was apparent in a survey distributed to 2,837 groups of visitors to Seattle Center between April 2005 through December 2005. GMA Research Corporation administered the survey as part of the *Seattle Center Economic Impact Assessment*. Of those surveyed 50% of the people were from out of state or outside King County and not considered a local visitor. In addition, most people surveyed were primarily visiting to engage in a specific activity (Table 1).<sup>70</sup> This is telling of how

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68 "2007-2012 Adopted Capital Improvement Program: Seattle Center Narrative."

69 City Budget Office, *2007-2012 Capital Improvement Program: Seattle Center*.

70 Beyers and GMA Research Corporation, "Seattle Center Economic Impact Assessment."

**Table 1. Responses to “Was the primary reason for your trip today/tonight to attend this performance/exhibition/event?”**

	<u>Sports</u>	<u>Dining &amp; Shopping</u>	<u>Arts</u>	<u>Attractions &amp; Museums</u>	<u>Major Festivals</u>	<u>Seattle Center Public Programs</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	97.3%	32.4%	98.2%	50.5%	93.2%	58.7%	82.0%	77.9%
No	2.7%	67.6%	1.8%	49.5%	6.8%	41.3%	18.0%	22.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Sample	372	108	731	620	425	378	128	2,762

Table 1: Responses to “Was the primary reason for your trip today/tonight to attend this performance/exhibition/event?”; Source: GMA Research Corporation. Seattle Center Economic Impact Assessment. Seattle Center: GMA Research Corporation, February 2006.

much the Seattle Center is a prominent tourist attraction and destination place. While it may be successful as a destination their is still the need for it to serve the surrounding neighborhood.

Site observations conducted at the Seattle Center also support that people visit the Seattle Center and activate spaces for a specific event. On Sunday, June 7, 2015 from 12:30-1:00pm I observed three spaces between buildings on the southern side of Mercer St. to compare their activity levels along the northern edge of the Seattle Center campus. It was 73 degrees and sunny making it enjoyable to be spending time outside. A performance was scheduled to begin at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall at 1:00pm. The three spaces that I observed were Kreielsheimer Promenade between Marion Oliver McCaw Hall and the Exhibition Hall (Space A), Founders Court between Exhibition Hall and the Cornish Playhouse (Space B), and the Cornish Playhouse courtyard (Space C). I spent approximately 10 minutes in each space.

Photographs taken in the field show that the level of activity decreased from Space A where there was high levels of activity to Space B where there was some activity to Space C where there was almost no activity (Figures 16, 17, 18) . Many people were entering Space A from the sidewalk along Mercer St. and walking through to enter



Figure 16: Space A; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Kreielzheimer Promenade*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 17: Space B; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Founders Court*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 18: Space C; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Cornish Playhouse courtyard*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall. People were also stationary either in clusters talking or individually talking on their cell phones, likely waiting outside before the performance started. In Space B most people also entered from the sidewalk along Mercer St., but instead of remaining in the space most people walked through it to reach the interior of the Seattle Center campus rather than spending time within the space. When I first arrived to Space C no one else was in the courtyard. While sitting there one person walking through the space and two other people a women and child came into the space and sat down to eat. Although these site observations only capture one moment in time they clearly show three spaces along the northern edge of Seattle Center and within the same block functioning very differently.

One conclusion that can be made is that it is evident that an event directly activates Space A. In addition it is important to consider that Marion Oliver McCaw Hall has undergo substantial alterations to the point that its' historic integrity has been lost and would not be eligible for individual City of Seattle Landmark designation, while both Exhibition Hall and the Cornish Playhouse are Modern era buildings constructed as



Figure 19: Interior of Armory; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Armory*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 21: Key Arena Plaza; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Key Arena Plaza*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



Figure 20: International Fountain; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *International Fountain*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.

part of the campus during the Seattle World's Fair. Space B and Space C were likely not active for two reasons, one no activity was going on at the Exhibition Hall or Cornish Playhouse at the time and second the Modern era design elements incorporated into the site. Space B is comprised of mostly hardscaping and the adjacent building facades to the space do not interact with pedestrians as they are majority blank brick walls at ground level. Space C should function somewhat differently as it is an enclosed courtyard that feels more like a private space, but it is also surrounded by almost entirely blank brick walls on three sides that are about two stories in height.

Site observations on Sunday, June 7, 2015 were also telling of how interior spaces of the Seattle Center campus are much more active than spaces along the edge of the Seattle Center. The Armory, which is centrally located on the campus, was extremely active as there were several events occurring inside the building and there is a food court located within the Armory (Figure 19). The International Fountain was filled with people even though no scheduled activity was occurring (Figure 20). The high levels of activity in these spaces is in stark contrast to the previously discussed Founder's Court space and Cornish Playhouse space as well as the hardscaped plaza east of 1st Ave. directly in front of Key Arena which was nearly empty (Figure 21).

## SEATTLE CENTER & ITS SURROUNDING CONTEXT TODAY

### *Neighborhood Overview*

Uptown is a designated mixed residential and employment Urban Center where regional significant growth in both households and jobs is expected to occur in the next several decades.<sup>71</sup> Currently Uptown has 7,300 residents and 14,801 jobs. It was projected that the total household count would increase from 4,580 households (2004) to 5,580 households in 2024. From 2005 to 2013 1,606 new housing units were constructed meaning a 161% growth increase clearly surpassing the 2024 growth target. While 39% of the 20-year employment growth target has been met, it is not growing as rapidly as household count.<sup>72</sup>

Majority (80%) of Uptown residents are white, which is 10% more than the make-up of citywide population, which is 70% white. The second largest population make-

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71 City of Seattle Department of Planning & Development, "City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan: A Plan for Managing Growth 2004-2024."

72 "Uptown Urban Design Framework Background Report," 2,3.

up is Asian in both Uptown (10%) and citywide (14%). The remaining 10% of the Uptown population is comprised of Black or African American (3%), Some Other Race (2%), American Indian & Alaskan Native (1%) and the rest was not available. 37% of residents make less than \$50K compared to 42% of all of Seattle residents who make less than \$50K. 33% of residents' income is between \$50-\$100K compared to citywide 30% between \$50-\$100K. The remaining 30% of residents have incomes above \$100K compared to 28% of all Seattleites that have incomes above \$100K.<sup>73</sup>

The Uptown neighborhood can be divided into three character defining subareas: Heart of Uptown, Uptown Urban and Uptown Park. The Seattle Center is not included in one of these subareas, but instead is defined as a Civic/Institutional area along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Figure 22). The Heart of Uptown character area is considered the vibrant core of the neighborhood comprised of small, retail and locally-owned businesses and restaurants (Figure 23). The Uptown Urban character area is comprised of various uses and surrounds the Seattle Center. This character area has the potential to have strong relationships between its fabric and the Seattle Center. The Uptown Park character area is mostly residential with a high concentration of 1920s and 1930s era brick apartments.<sup>74</sup>

### *Site Analysis*

Although the Seattle Center is a thriving piece of Uptown as mentioned before it struggles to be integrated into the neighborhood and be a true benefit to the community. First an-depth site analysis of Uptown is needed to understand the neighborhood in which the Seattle Center resides. I participated in the Uptown Seattle Studio in Spring 2014 which produced the *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report* that included an in-depth site analysis of the neighborhood and provided a

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73 "Uptown Urban Design Framework Background Report," 11,12.

74 Ibid., 5,6.

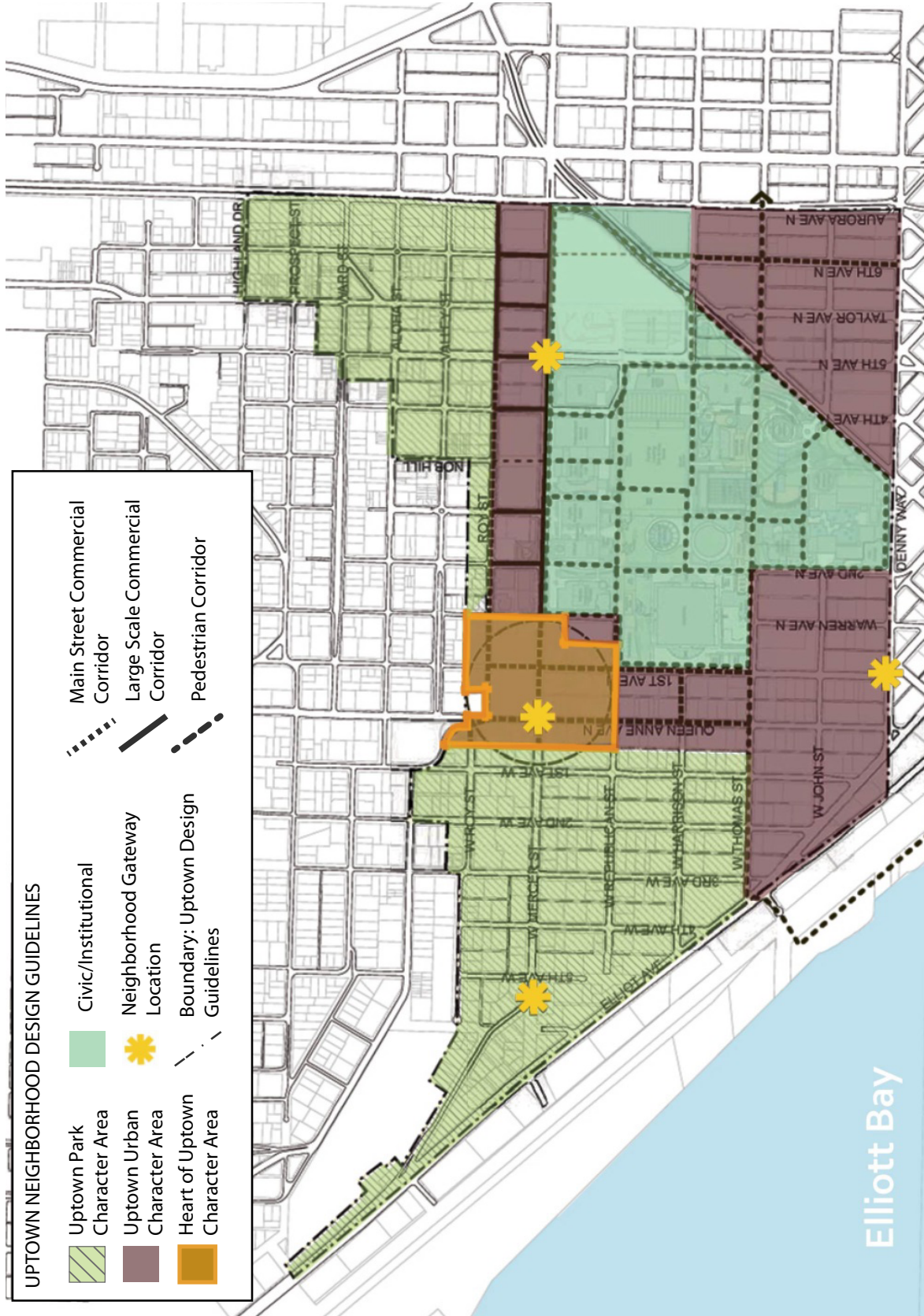


Figure 22: Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines - Character Subareas; Source: "Uptown Urban Design Framework Background Report." Seattle, WA: City of Seattle Department of Development, 2014.

Figure 23: Heart of Uptown - Queen Anne Ave.; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Queen Anne Ave.* Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.



starting point for this analysis. After the site analysis it is crucial to understand the plans that have already been developed that strive to integrate the Seattle Center into the neighborhood and larger City context. These include the *Century 21 Master Plan* (2008), *Century 21 Design Guidelines* (2009), *Uptown Design Guidelines* (2009, revised 2013) and *Uptown Urban Design Framework* (in development).

#### *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report*

In spring of 2014 the University of Washington Department of Urban Design & Planning held a studio to develop an analysis of the neighborhood in addition to recommending design interventions. The final product of the studio was the *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report* published in June 2014 intended to be used in the development of the Uptown Urban Design Framework (UDF). Throughout the studio, urban designer, Lyle Bicknell with the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development (DPD) provided guidance and feedback on the studio's finding. The final plan was presented to the City of Seattle DPD in June 2014. The report is divided into two sections; Part 1: Analysis and Part 2: Interventions. The Analysis section contains six sub-sections the first being Context followed by five sub-sections that cover the five themes identified

by DPD: Connectivity, Public Realm, Living in Uptown, Economic Vitality and Seattle Center.<sup>75</sup> This report was a crucial reference for the following site analysis which interprets and furthers findings from the studio in relation to Seattle Center specifically. In addition, several of the maps have been adapted from the studio report.

### Connectivity & Public Realm

The Seattle Center is served by several frequent transit lines, including the RapidRide D & E Lines (bus rapid transit) and the monorail that was originally constructed for the World's Fair and still runs from downtown Seattle to the Seattle Center (Figure 24). As for pedestrians there are several connectivity issues, especially between the neighborhood boundary and surrounding areas due to topography. In addition poor connections around the edges of the Seattle Center to the west and northeast were identified as well as relationships between significant areas of Uptown, such as the Heart of Uptown and Seattle Center (Figure 25). Most of the public art within the neighborhood is concentrated within the Seattle Center, another reason for people to visit the Seattle Center.

A project nearly completed to improve connectivity is the Mercer West Corridor Project transforming the street into two ways and the SR 99 Tunnel entrance/exit currently underway as part of the Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement. In addition there are streetscape concept plans to make Denny Way a complete street and Thomas Street a green street, both providing more multimodal connections within the neighborhood.<sup>76</sup>

### Living in Uptown

Uptown is comprised of several housing typologies: single-family residential, multi-family residential and mixed use. The mixed use housing typology is centrally

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75 University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 4,7.

76 Ibid., 12-16.

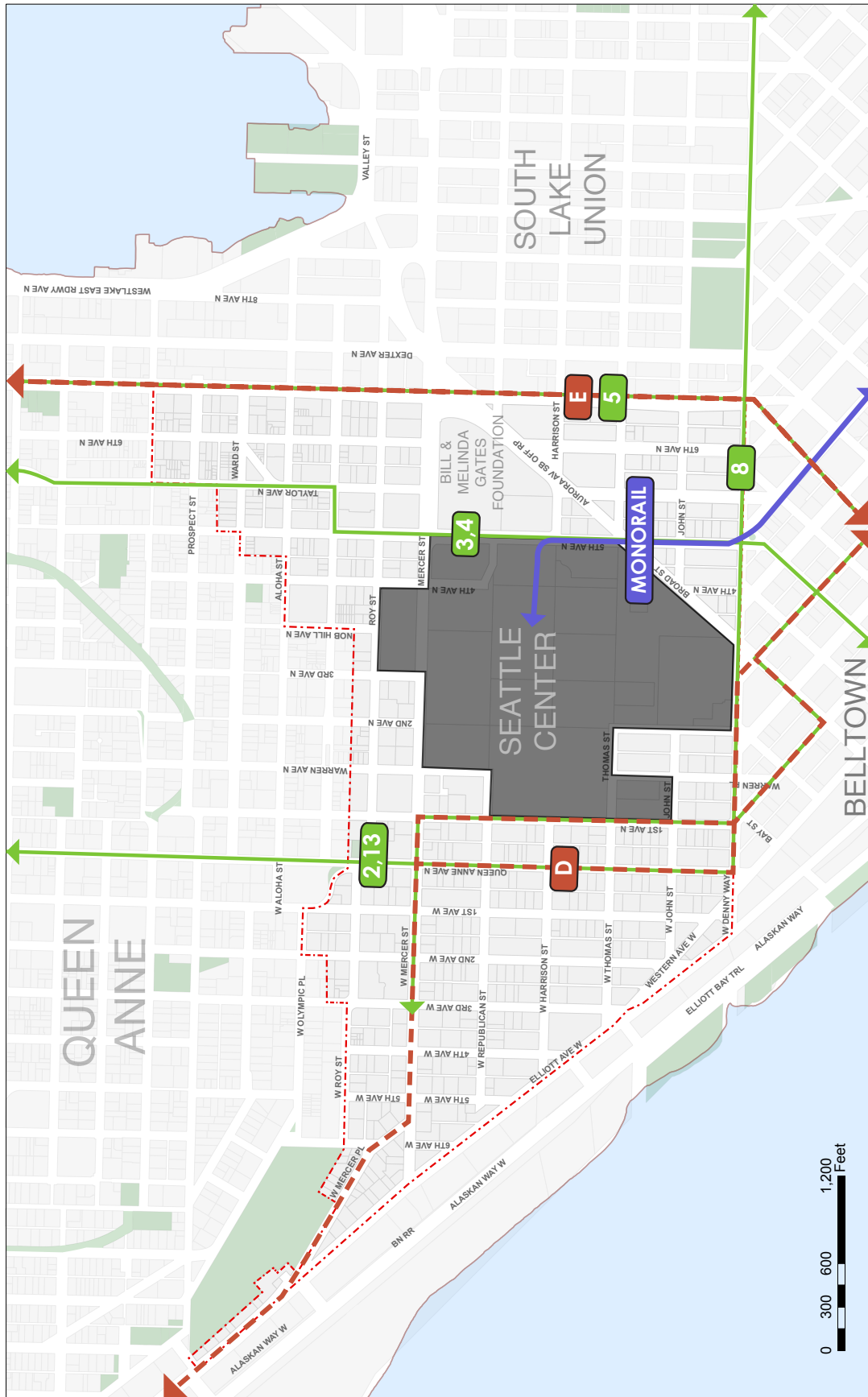


Figure 24: Connectivity: Frequent Transit; Adapted from: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

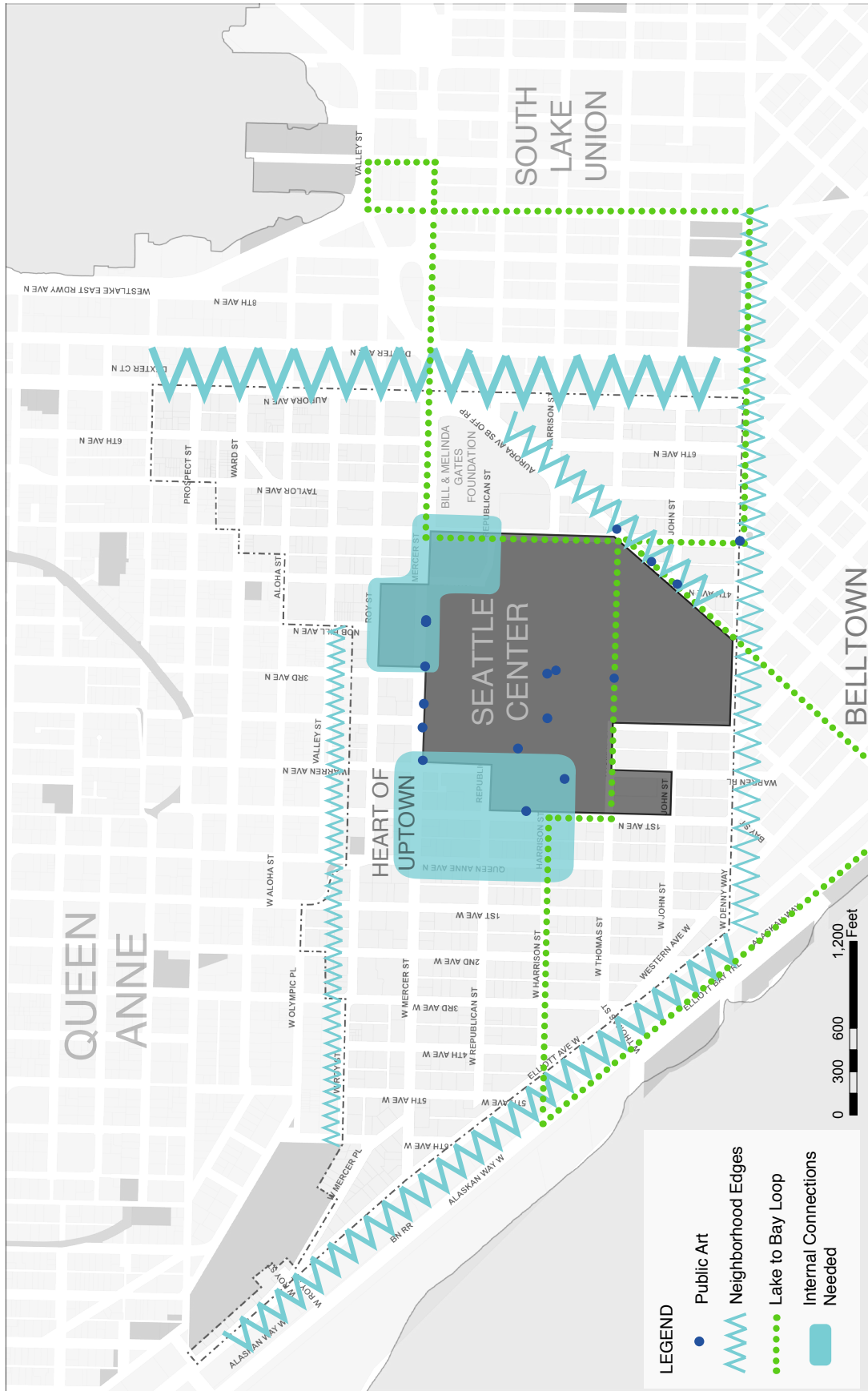


Figure 25: Issues & Opportunities: Pedestrian Connectivity; Adapted from: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

concentrated closer to the Seattle Center, where as multi-family and single-family is concentrated in the northeast and northwest areas of the neighborhood (Figure 26).<sup>77</sup>

### Economic Vitality

Dominant clusters of businesses and services occur in the Heart of Uptown and along Queen Anne Ave. In addition neighborhood businesses are also clustered within the Heart of Uptown. These areas could be opportunities of connection between the Seattle Center and Uptown businesses. A little over a quarter of the businesses are professional services (28%), followed by Eating/Drinking (22%) and neighborhood services (16%).<sup>78</sup>

### Seattle Center

The Seattle Center was studied for its important organizing features such as landmarks, gathering space, pedestrian flow and edges (Figure 27).<sup>79</sup> The Seattle Center has two large central gathering spaces, one indoor space at the Armory and the second the outside International Fountain area. Several landmarks (in the sense of key visually defining structures, not necessarily designated City of Seattle Historic Landmarks) were identified: the Key Arena, International Fountain, EMP and Space Needle. Pedestrian flow is still heavily influenced by the pre-existing street grid that was used for pedestrian pathways during the World's Fair. Hard edge conditions occur most prominently around buildings along the northern side of the site and around the Pacific Science Center on the southern side of the site. The building entrances are more inward facing serving Seattle Center pedestrians versus Uptown pedestrians.<sup>80</sup> Multiple pedestrian entry ways occur around the edges of the Seattle Center with two identified

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77 University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 23-24.

78 Ibid., 26-28.

79 Ibid., 31.

80 Ibid., 32.

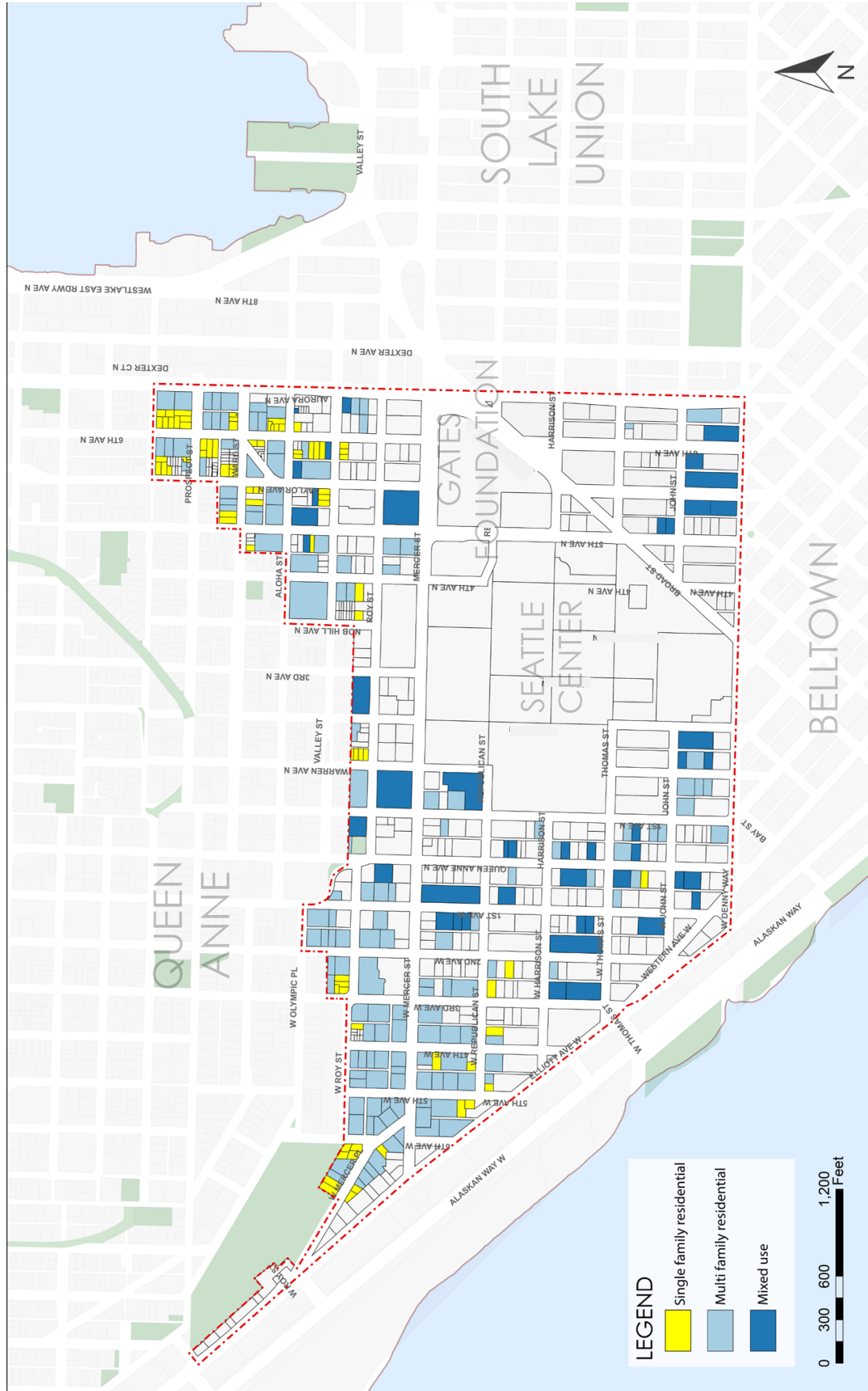


Figure 26: Residential Typology; Adapted from: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

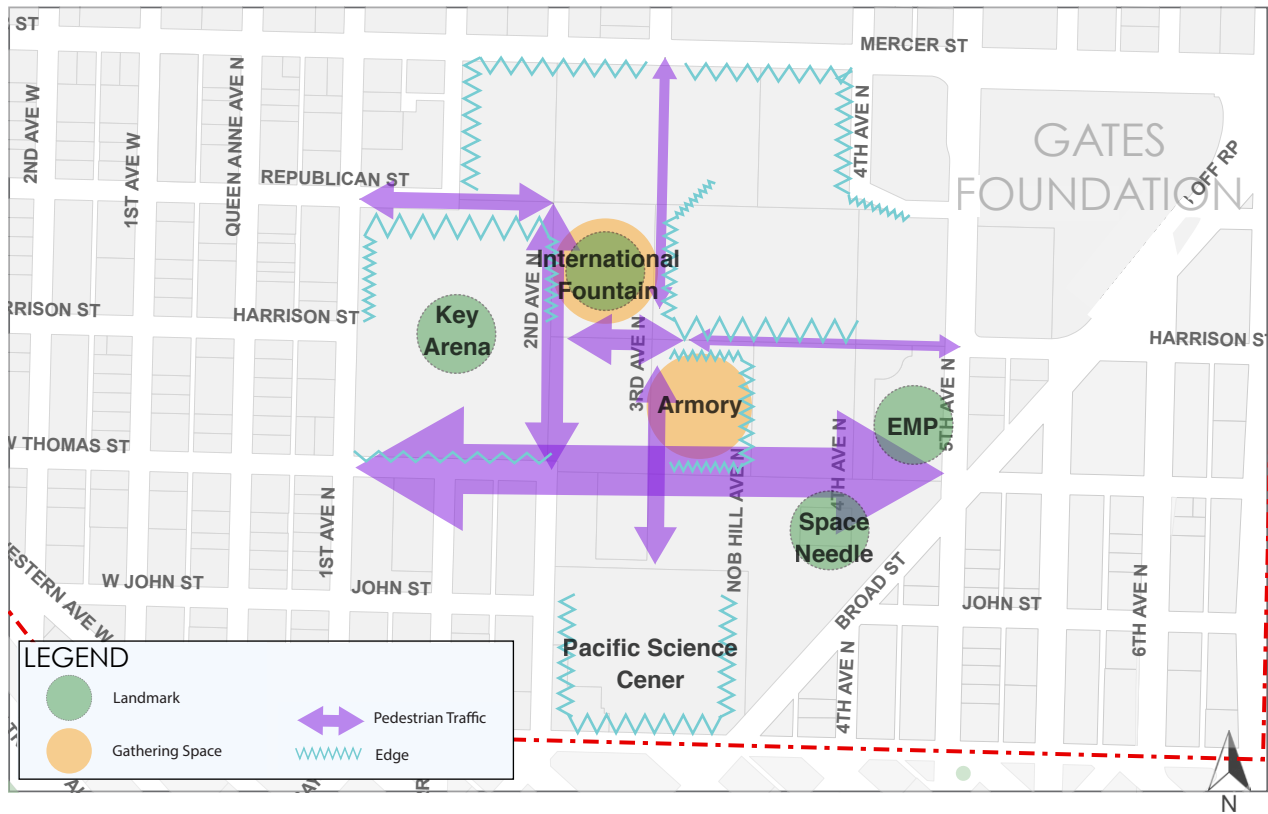


Figure 27: Seattle Center: Pedestrian Flow, Edges, Landmarks; Adapted from: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

as significant at 1st and Republican as it is near the Heart of Uptown and one at Broad St. near the Space Needle, a Seattle Center magnet (Figure 28).<sup>81</sup>

### *Intervention Recommendations*

The site analysis led to the selection of three crucial areas within Uptown that could be improved through design intervention: the Heart of Uptown, Roy Street Corridor and the Seattle Center (Figure 29). It was recommended that the Heart of Uptown, a vibrant core, should be expanded and the public right of way activated with interventions, such as open street festivals, wayfinding and streetscape improvements, such as parklets.

81 University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 78.



Figure 28: Seattle Center: Pedestrian Entry Points; Adapted from: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

The Roy Street Corridor was identified as a potential retail district with opportunities to redevelop areas of the corridor, such as the Mercer Street Parking Garage.<sup>82</sup>

Recommendations for the Seattle Center area included focusing on three critical entries into the Seattle Center: Northwest Rooms, Harrison and 5th, and the Space Needle (Figure 30). The recommendations for the Northwest Rooms entry were: more

<sup>82</sup> University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 34-47.



Figure 29: Focus Areas; Source: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

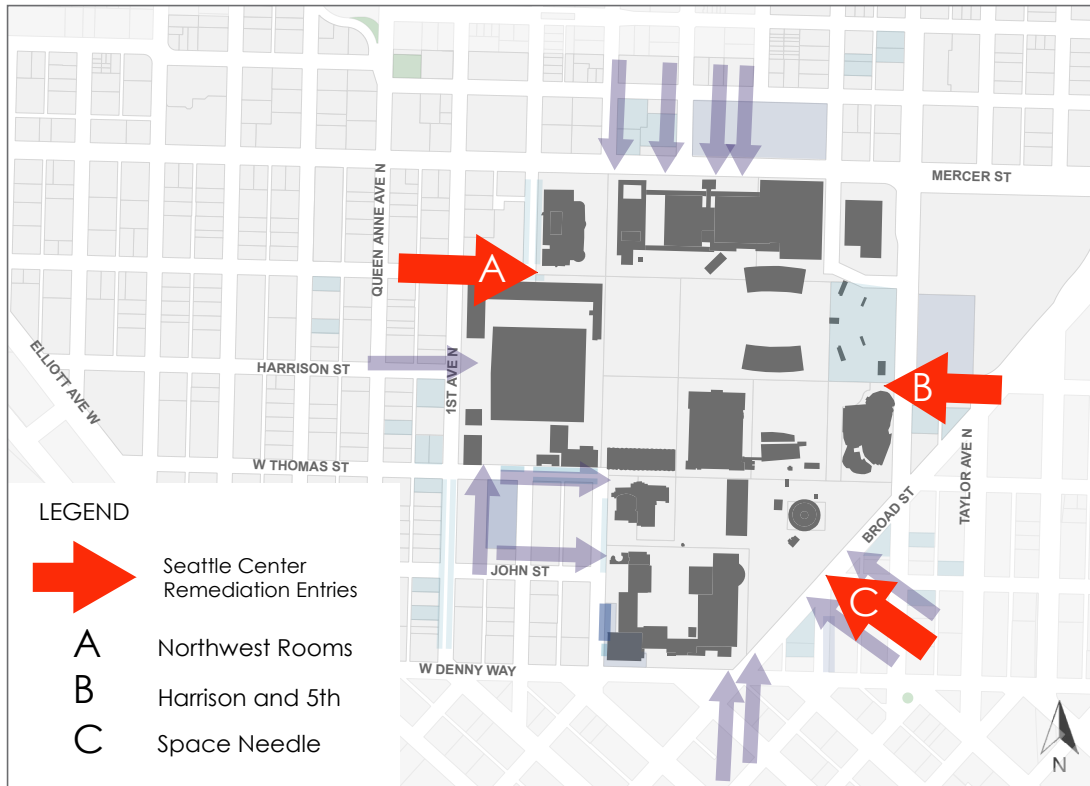


Figure 30: Seattle Center: Intervention Entry Points; Source: University of Washington Seattle Studio. "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework." Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Prepared for: City of Seattle Department of Development, June 2014.

pronounced entry way into Seattle Center through Uptown, added Uptown wayfinding, creation of a multimodal street (currently auto-centric), and improved sidewalk conditions. At the Harrison & 5th entry it was proposed to activate the large blank wall possible with art and to create "place" in the plaza. At the Space Needle entry it was proposed to connect to the Uptown triangle, create a defined "Destination Entryway" and expand the pedestrian right of way.<sup>83</sup> These entry points address a critical need: making the Seattle Center edges more permeable between the Center itself and the surrounding Uptown neighborhood. As mentioned before these recommendations were presented to the City of Seattle DPD and are now publicly available and contributing to the conversations on the Uptown UDF.

83 University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 78-88.

### *Century 21 Master Plan (2008)*

One of the issues with the Seattle Center is that it has high concentrations of activity at select moments in time. To achieve true integration into the surrounding neighborhood the Seattle Center must provide continual amounts of activity. In addition to break the barrier between the Uptown neighborhood and the Seattle Center there needs to be a spill over of the Seattle Center's activity. The *Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan*, while it attempts to reinvigorate the Center itself it does not completely address the surrounding neighborhood (Figure 31).

Of the many goals of the *Century 21 Master Plan* some of the key goals that would have significant impacts on the Uptown neighborhood are increasing the open space, connecting to the fabric of the adjacent neighborhood and increasing accessibility of the grounds.<sup>84</sup> Although the plan speaks of the connection to the adjacent neighborhood, understandably much of its' focus remains on the interior of the center, especially the Center House and central open space, as opposed to its' edges.

### *Century 21 Design Guidelines (2009)*

To implement the *Century 21 Master Plan*, a set of more detailed guidelines were created to help guide new projects. The planning and design goals were as follows:

- "The mission of Seattle Center is sound and the future is bright.
- The campus should be designed to draw people into the center of the grounds.
- Open spaces should be increased, preserved and accessible to all.
- The Center should be a leader in sustainable design and operations.
- Entrances and visual connections into and through the campus should be clearly defined.

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84 Seattle Center Century 21 Committee, Seattle Center, and City of Seattle, "Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan."



Figure 31: Seattle Century 21 Master Plan; Source: Seattle Center Century 21 Committee, Seattle Center, and City of Seattle. "Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan." Seattle, WA, 2008.

- A mix of activities and amenities should be inviting to the diversity of Seattle Center users.
- Pedestrian-friendly planning should unify the campus.
- New design should emphasize flexibility, vibrancy, clarity and artistic expression.
- Transportation planning must be a central element.
- Future development should build on the tradition of being a good neighbor.”<sup>85</sup>

*Uptown Design Guidelines* (2009, revised 2013)

The neighborhood design guidelines for Uptown are used by the Design Review Board for new development subject to design review within the neighborhood in combination with the *Seattle Design Guidelines*. The intent of the guidelines is to preserve and enhance the architectural characteristics, urban design and public spaces within the Uptown neighborhood. The *Uptown Design Guidelines* cover urban design aspects such as architectural context and character, connectivity, street-level interaction and open space concepts, but several priorities are identified within the guidelines. Of these priorities several directly relate to the Seattle Center:

- The Heart of Uptown as a vibrant core and ‘shoulder’ to the Seattle Center should continue to serve as an active node.
- The Uptown Urban character area should harness its’ proximity to Seattle Center and forge strong relationships with the urban fabric with the Center.
- The Roy and Mercer has the potential to become a larger scale commercial corridor and accommodate larger retail stores and offices.
- Pedestrian corridors in and around the Seattle Center are crucial to the neighborhood and new designs should enhance these corridors.<sup>86</sup>

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85 Seattle Center Century 21 Committee, Seattle Center, and City of Seattle, “Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan.”

86 City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, “Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines.”

### *Uptown Urban Design Framework (In development)*

As previously discussed the City of Seattle DPD is currently developing an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for the Uptown Urban Center. UDFs are created in collaboration with the community and as part of the planning process include community feedback and comments through public charrettes. Since these documents are created in collaboration they attempt to represent a collective vision from the community. The City of Seattle DPD then uses the document as a guide for future development in the area. The first Community Open House was held in November 2013, followed by the release of the UDF Background Report released in January 2014. In June 2014 the previously discussed *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report* was presented to Seattle DPD and shortly after shared with the public via online and at community design charrettes that began summer 2014. The UDF is still underway and the final plan has not been released yet.<sup>87</sup>

In the first Community Open House in November 2013 DPD lead a conversation with residents on the Framework to receive feedback on five focus areas: Connectivity, Economic Vitality, Living in Uptown, the Public Realm, and Seattle Center. While the conversation reached a broad range of topics several key aspects about the Seattle Center were identified:

1. Seattle Center is an asset.
2. Better connections should be created through the Center.
3. Seattle Center should have a permeable edge.
4. Seattle Center should be better connected to the waterfront.

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87 City of Seattle, "What's Happening Now?"

In addition residents expressed a need for a community center or public gathering space.<sup>88</sup> The Seattle Center's open spaces may be able to meet these needs.

The site analysis and contributing Uptown plans: *Century 21 Master Plan*, *Century 21 Design Guidelines*, *Uptown Design Guidelines* and *Uptown Urban Design Framework*, all identify that the Seattle Center is a key element of the Uptown neighborhood, but one that could substantially benefit from urban design interventions, especially at key areas around the Center's edges. These interventions should not only enhance the Seattle Center's connection to the rest of the neighborhood, but also preserve the historic integrity of the site itself.

## **STEP 1) PRESERVE:** PRESERVATION THROUGH HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION & DESIGNATION

### *Documentation*

A critical first step to preserving any significant historical site is documentation. In terms of the Seattle Center, a recent study (2013), the *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*, was completed by Artifacts Architectural Consulting, Inc. to evaluate the historic site and collection of buildings that comprises the current Seattle Center. In 2012 the site and buildings celebrated 50 years since the Century 21 Exposition making them eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This also triggered the Seattle Center to hire Artifacts Architectural Consulting, Inc. to conduct the survey and evaluate the Seattle Center properties to see which were eligible for City of Seattle Landmark designation.<sup>89</sup>

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88 City of Seattle Department of Development, *November 7 2013 Uptown Urban Design Framework Open House: Summary of Public Comment*.

89 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*, 3.

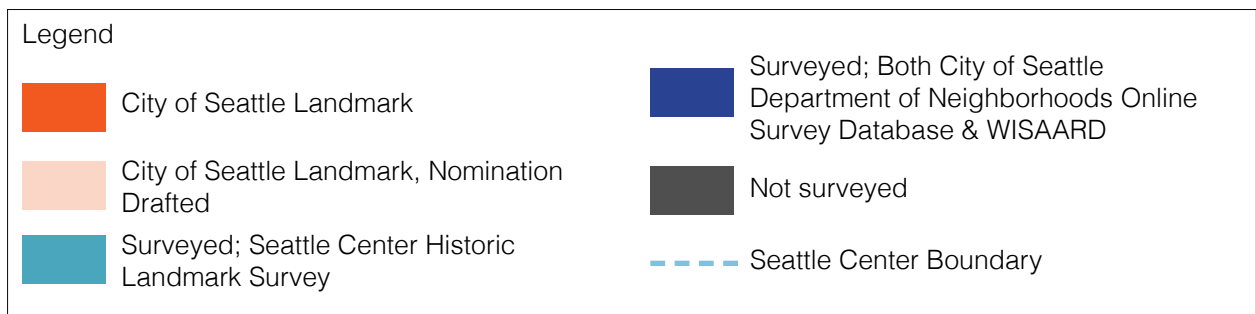
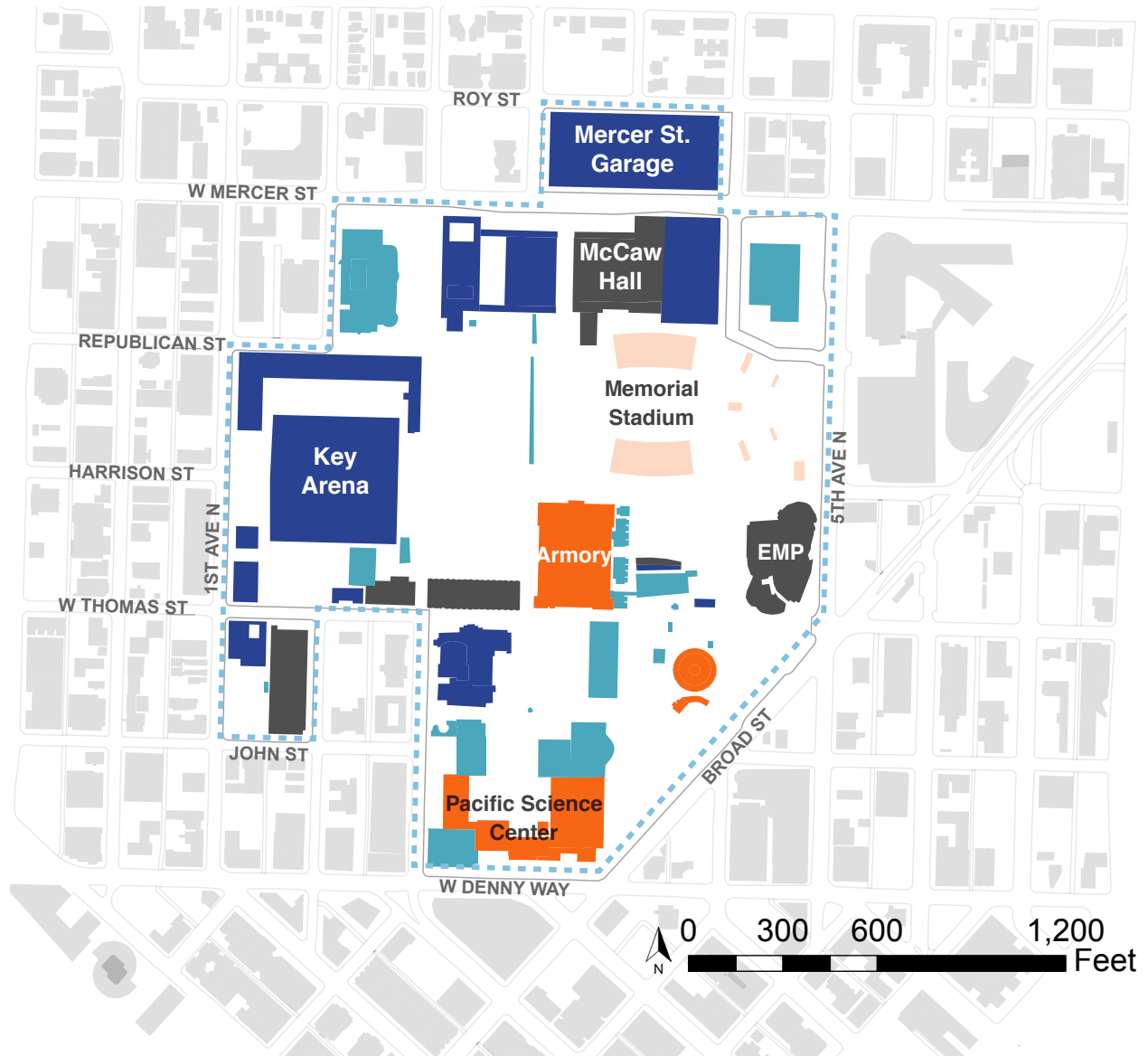


Figure 32: Seattle Center Documentation; Sources: City of Seattle GIS Data, "Parcel Boundaries Delineated by King County & Parklands & Green Space." and Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. "Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study," March 2013.; Diagram: Katie O'Loone

The document surveyed most properties that were built after 1989 making them 25 years or older at the time of the survey in 2013 and at the eligible age to be nominated as a City of Seattle Landmark. The properties that were not surveyed are those that were already City of Seattle Landmarks or had been previously documented. City of Seattle Landmarks within the Seattle Center are: the Space Needle (Listed 1999), Seattle Center House - Armory (Listed 2010), Pacific Science Center (Listed 2010), Seattle Monorail (Listed 2003), Kobe Bell (Listed 2010), Horiuchi Mural (Listed 2010).<sup>90</sup> Previously documented properties include those recorded by the Department of Neighborhoods online survey database and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (WISAARD) online database (Figure 32).<sup>91</sup> The buildings that have never been documented before are 25 years or less in age, except McCaw Hall, which has not been documented because it has been altered significantly and is no longer eligible for Landmark status.

The survey concludes by identifying sites and buildings that could be nominated for designation and recommending that the Seattle Center be designated as a historic district. To strengthen the district nomination it was recommended in the *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study* to include two historic concentration areas to be presented to the Landmarks Preservation Commission as groups; the Thiry Concentration and Kirk Concentration (Figure 33). Both concentrations are associated with a single architecture firm and are recommended to include the properties shown in the Table 2.<sup>92</sup> The concentration areas, currently Seattle Landmarked buildings and Landmark eligible buildings are identified in Figure 33.

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90 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*, 13.

91 *Ibid.*, 15.

92 *Ibid.*, 61.

Thiry Concentration	Kirk Concentration
International Fountain Pavilion	Exhibition Hall
Key Arena	Playhouse
NASA Building	Colonnade
Seattle Center Pavilion	Mercer Street Parking Garage
Northwest Rooms	Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
West Coast Building	Mercer Arts Arena

Table 2: Recommended Concentration Areas; Adapted from: Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. "Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study," March 2013.

Shortly after the *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study* was completed it was presented by Artifacts Architectural Consulting, Inc. to the City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board during the briefing section of the May 1, 2013 meeting. The Landmarks Commission appreciated the report and supported the approach of the two concentration areas.<sup>93</sup> During the public comment period Docomomo representative, Andrew Phillips, expressed surprise that there was not already a historic district nomination underway and others agreed that Seattle Center should be approached in a holistic way. It was also noted that with no current designation the proposal for the KEXP project proposed for the Northwest Rooms on Seattle Center's campus would need to keep moving forward and would not be subject to any design review regulations.<sup>94</sup> Despite strong support for the Seattle Center to be designated a historic district there seems to be little discussion of pursuing the nomination. There was an article released in April 2013 in *Crosscut*, an online electronic journal in the Pacific Northwest, discussing the *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Survey* and the historic district nomination, but there does not appear to be other discussions surrounding the historic district proposal.<sup>95</sup> The amount of time and work that go into nominations could be holding it up, but what is important to take away is that there is support for the Seattle Center to become a historic district.

93 "The City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board Meeting Minutes: May 1, 2013," 12.

94 *Ibid.*, 13.

95 Berger, "Seattle Center: Is Historic District Designation Ahead?"

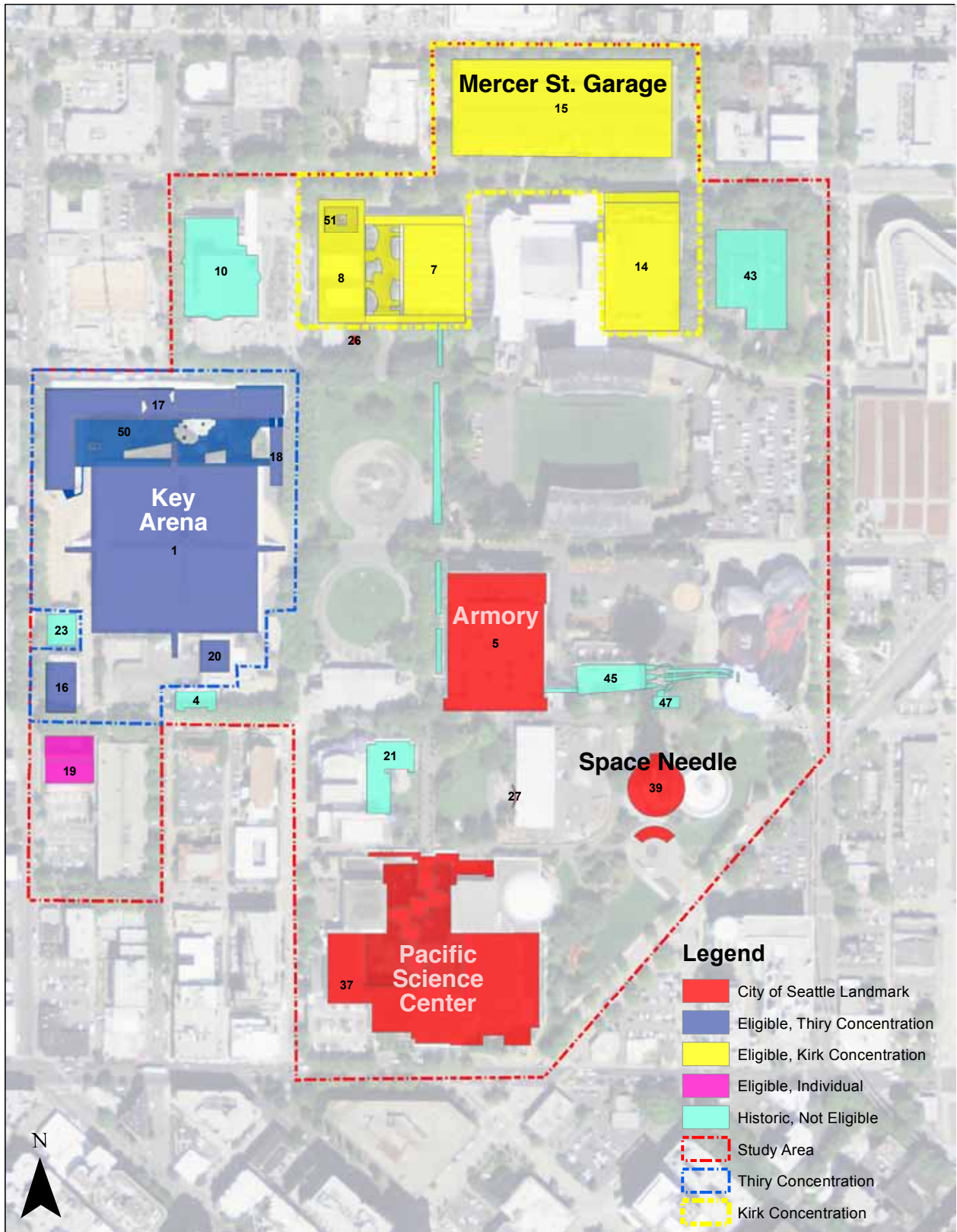


Figure 33: Landmarks Eligibility Map; Source: Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. "Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study," March 2013. (used without permission)

### *Historic District Designation*

Historic Districts include multiple properties within a designated area and properties are identified as contributing or non-contributing to the overall district architectural and historical significance. Since the properties within a district are evaluated collectively for their overall integrity it lowers the burden on individual properties.<sup>96</sup> If the historic district recommendations were carried through to designation then the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board would be required to review changes to the district helping preserve its' historic integrity.<sup>97</sup> In Seattle once an area is designated a historic district, properties within the boundary of the district must receive a Certificate of Approval from the Landmarks Preservation Board before the City will issue permits for changes to the property. In Seattle there are eight historic districts and the types of changes to properties that require a Certificate of Approval vary from district to district. For example the Ballard Avenue Landmark District requires a Certificate of Approval for changes with buildings and public right-of-ways, while Fort Lawton Landmark District requires a Certificate of Approval for changes to buildings and landscapes (Table 3).<sup>98</sup>

A historic district designation is the best preservation action for the Seattle Center as it would help preserve its' collective historic integrity while allowing for the continual evolution of the site itself. In addition, there is already support for a historic district that would approach a Seattle Center designation from a holistic viewpoint. It would be appropriate to require Certificate of Approvals for buildings, landscapes and the public right-of-way as the Seattle Center is composed of varying types of individual properties that contribute to the overall site.

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96 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study*, 61.

97 Ibid., 61-62.

98 "Historic District," City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, accessed June 7, 2015, <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/historic-preservation/historic-districts>. (Archived by WebCite@ <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDytQq8y>)

<b>Ballard Avenue Landmark District</b>	<b>Fort Lawton Landmark District</b>
<p><b>Certificate of Approval Needed for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Any change to the outside of any building or structure.</li> <li>• Installation of any new sign or change to any existing sign.</li> <li>• Installation of a new awning or canopy.</li> <li>• Any change to an interior that affects the exterior.</li> <li>• New addition, construction, and/or remodel.</li> <li>• Any change in a public right-of-way or other public space, including parks and sidewalks.</li> <li>• Demolition of any building or structure.</li> <li>• Exterior painting”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Certificate of Approval Needed for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Any change to the outside of any building or structure.</li> <li>• Any changes to the landscape.</li> <li>• Any change to an interior that affects the exterior.</li> <li>• New addition, construction, and/or remodel.</li> <li>• Any change in a public right-of-way or other public space.</li> <li>• Demolition of any building or structure.</li> <li>• Exterior painting”</li> </ul>

Table 3: Ballard & Fort Lawton: Changes to Historic Districts Needing Certificates of Approval; Adapted from: City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. “Ballard Avenue Landmark District.” Government Website. Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2015. and City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. “Fort Lawton Landmark District.” Government Website. Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2015. <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/historic-preservation/historic-districts/fort-lawton>

*Other forms of Documentation*

While local level designation tends to have the most stringent regulations when it comes to historic properties there are several other forms of designation and documentation of historic sites, such as state and national registers. In addition there is the Heritage Documentation Program that administers several historic property surveys: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and most recently formed Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS).<sup>99</sup> Completed surveys are kept within the Library of Congress collection. For the past six years HALS has hosted a competition to submit a short format history to encourage the documentation of historic landscapes; this year’s theme: Modern era landscapes.

99 National Park Service, “Heritage Documentation Programs: HABS/HAER/HALS.”

*HALS 2015 Challenge: Documenting Modern era Landscapes*

The National Park Service sees the need to document significant mid-20th century Modern era landscapes that respond to regional environments, create human scale space and incorporate sculptural compositions (Appendix A, Challenge Flier). The competition was inspired by the fact that many Modern era landscapes go unnoticed and their significance is unappreciated.<sup>100</sup> The short submittal form includes three sections: Significance, Description, and History and is typically 1-5 pages in length.

While some individual buildings and sites within the Seattle Center have already been documented the HALS platform allows for the site to be documented as a collective site. As discussed with the historic district designation Seattle Center should be approached from a holistic standpoint. HALS allows for the entire site to be documented as a whole and documenting it as such would support the significance of it being developed as a comprehensive site. As an effort to document the Seattle Center as an entire site and to lay the foundation for preservation I have drafted a short form submittal for the competition (Pages 65-68).

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100 National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, "2015 HALS Challenge: Documenting Modern era Landscapes."

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### Century 21 Exposition Site (The Seattle World's Fair, Contemporary Name: Seattle Center)

HALS NO. XX-##

- Location:** Address: 305 Harrison Street, Seattle, WA 98109 (Center of Site)  
County: King County  
Bounded by: The site is bounded by Mercer St. to the north, 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. to the west, Broad St. to the southeast, Denny Way to the south and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. to the west.  
Geospatial Point Coordinates:
- Significance:** The Century 21 Exposition Site now known as the Seattle Center is the site of the World's Fair of 1962 in Seattle, WA. Paul Thiry attributed to introducing modernism to the Pacific Northwest was hired as the primary planner and architect of the Century 21 Exposition master plan. In addition to the master plan he designed several buildings and pavilions on the site, including the International Fountain Pavilion, Key Arena, NASA Building, Seattle Center Pavilion, Northwest Rooms and West Court Building. The Century 21 Exposition expressed the newfound space age and innovative technologies through its' modernist site and building designs.
- Description:** Similar to how the World's Fair reflected the newfound space age and innovative technologies, the modern design movement believed that science and new technologies would produce, "a genuine 'modern age' architecture of universal principles." The Century 21 Exposition site has a decentralized layout and a collection of utilitarian buildings that avoid applied decoration and use architecture as volume to maximize the flexibility of space.
- Since the end of the World's Fair several structures have been added to the Seattle Center campus, such as the Seattle Children's Theatre, the Skate Park, Vera Project, Experience Music Project, and Chihuly Garden and Glass. While some buildings have been replaced several key defining characteristics of the site layout and landscape remain. In the original Thiry plan the pre-existing street grid was essentially maintained and drove the layout and ordering of pedestrian travel within the fairgrounds. Most of this pedestrian grid and circulation within the core of the campus is still intact today. Another characteristic defining piece of the overall master plan is the International Plaza designed by Paul Thiry, Otto E. Holmadahl and Associates, L.J. Janzen and V.L. Nichols. This included the International Fountain that still remains today.
- History:** In 1958, Paul Thiry often referred to as the father of modernism in Washington was hired as the primary planner and architect of the Century 21 Exposition. Other well-known modernist designers were involved in the creation of the

World's Fair site through a voluntary Design Standards Advisory Board. The Board was comprised of several Washington architects: Perry Johanson, John Detlie, Robert Deitz, and Paul Thiry, as well as John Spaeth, Seattle's Planning Commission Director at the time. Two-well known modernist designers that also joined the Board were architect Minoru Yamasaki, designer of the New York World Trade Center and notable Seattle building, Rainier Tower, and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, designer of Lovejoy Plaza in Portland and Seattle's Freeway Park.

Prior to becoming the home to the 1962 World's Fair the site was designated as an ideal location for a city civic center. The "Plan of Seattle" by Virgil Bogue originally introduced the idea in 1911. The plan identified the Lower Queen Anne neighborhood (now home to Seattle Center) as the ideal area for a civic center. Although the Bogue plan was ultimately rejected several years later, from 1927-1928 Seattle took the first steps to implement civic structures in the Lower Queen Anne area. This cluster of structures was built in a four-block area bounded by Mercer and Harrison Streets and Third and Fourth Avenues North. The area was adjacent to two already-built neighborhood public amenities, the Warren Avenue School and Mercer Playground. Combined this area comprised six-blocks of the future 13-block Century 21 Exposition site. The area began to act as a civic core drawing in residents from outside the Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. A little over ten years later in 1939 a field armory was built by the Washington National Guard adjacent to the civic building cluster making a total of seven of the future 13-block Century 21 Exposition site public use.

By the 40's the civic buildings were no longer meeting the needs of the community and in 1946 the Seattle Civic Arts Committee recommended to Seattle Mayor William F. Devin that a civic center should be created with land adjacent to the pre-existing civic buildings and armory. While there was support the city did not acquire the land. In 1954 these efforts were resurrected when Seattle Mayor Allen Pomeroy created a committee to work towards creating a civic center for Seattle. One year later a group of Seattleites proposed the idea of creating a world's fair and the Washington World's Fair Commission was formed led by Edward Carlson.

Together the World's Fair Commission and Civic Center Committee appointed by the Mayor decided that the goals of both organizations could be met by first using the site for the World's Fair and then as a permanent civic center. It was also determined that the best site for a civic center would be the area where several buildings were already used as civic amenities in Lower Queen Anne. In addition, by the 50's the surrounding neighborhood began to be filled with small commercial enterprises and homes tended to be rented versus owner-occupied. It was believed that, "the transformation of a semi-blighted area into an attractive downtown civic center and park would heavily increase the surrounding property values, a contribution not only to the beauty of the city, but a solid contribution

to increased tax receipts for the city.” In a letter to the city’s resident’s the 1962 Mayor Gordon S. Clinton stated that 90% of the buildings were intended to be permanent and used in the future as a major civic center that could host national political conventions, theater productions, operas, trade fairs, and major sports events. In November of 1956 a \$7.5 million bond was passed by voters to build the civic center for the World’s Fair.

Architect Clayton Young was hired by the Washington World’s Fair Commission and the Civic Center Commission to oversee the site development. He was charged with the task of ensuring that the site design could be utilized as a civic center post-fair. Architect Clayton Young hired Paul Thiry as the primary architect and planner of the Century 21 Exposition site.

The Fair opened on April 21st and had drawn over 9,600,000 people by the time it closed on October 21st, 1962. The Fair embraced the new frontier of the space age and was divided into five major themes: World of Science, World of Century 21, World of Commerce and Industry, World of Entertainment and World of Art. These areas drove the site design of the Fair. Each theme had it’s own area within the fairgrounds connected by the Boulevards of the World. The various exhibits also centered on the idea of new technologies, science, and the promise of the space age. The U.S. Science Pavilion contained the Spacearium, a simulated ride through space, while the Washington State Coliseum hosted the exhibit of how humans would live in the 21st century. The Commerce and Industry exhibit displayed the most innovative creations of the time, such as the cordless telephone, and predictions of future inventions. In addition forty different nations provided International exhibits and the Fine Arts Exhibit displayed extensive artwork including Northwest Coast Native Artwork. Other Fair highlights included the Boulevards of the World containing multiple shops and crafts, the Gayway with its’ many rides, and the Space Needle, at the time the tallest structure west of the Mississippi. In addition the Monorail demonstrated the future of mass transit moving 10,000 passengers an hour from downtown Seattle to the World’s Fair.

Once the fair ended temporary buildings were demolished and the Memorial Stadium lease ended and went back to the Seattle Public Schools control, while the Armory lease was extended and the building eventually bought by the City. Some structures such as the Coliseum, Playhouse, and Opera House were designed to serve the Civic Center after the fair, while other structures were selected to be maintained due to their architectural significance such as the Science Pavilion and Space Needle. Some smaller temporary structures were also maintained to serve future programming within the Civic Center.

Today the Seattle Center still serves as a Civic Center for the City and attracts 12 million visitors each year. The site hosts over 5,000 events and festivals each year, such as Folklife, Bite of Seattle, and Bumbershoot each attracting large

crowds to the Center.

Sources: Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. "Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study," March 2013.

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Historian: Katie O'Lone

## **STEP 2) REACTIVATE:** BEYOND DOCUMENTATION & DESIGNATION - REACTIVATION THROUGH DESIGN INTERVENTION

As identified in the literature review there are several elements directly related to Modern era design that often do not function well today in urban settings. These elements include: 1) decentralized campus layouts, 2) lack of pedestrian scale structures and/or large boxy buildings, 3) lack of street activation at the pedestrian level and 4) uninviting hardscaping of spaces. In historically significant Modern era sites as with the Seattle Center these challenges can best be addressed once a historic district designation is in place. The historic district designation helps protect the integrity of the site as a whole, while allowing for approved changes that may need to happen to reactivate the site.

### *Priority Areas*

With a large area such as the Seattle Center the first step to reactivating the site is to determine where the most pressing issues are occurring. From the site analysis of Seattle Center and Uptown it is clear that the edges of the Seattle Center are the most in need of reactivation through better integration into the surrounding Uptown neighborhood. In addition several areas (Roy Street Corridor, Heart of Uptown and the Seattle Center) were specifically identified by the *Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report* as areas that could benefit from various design interventions. As for preservation the *Seattle Center Historic Landmark Survey* identified two significant concentration areas comprised of a collection of structures and spaces designed by the same architect. By overlaying the intervention areas and recommended concentration areas we see that there is clear overlap at the edges at the Northwest Rooms and Mercer Street (Figure 34). These should become top priority areas as they are crucial components of the proposed historic district while at the same time presented with challenges from their Modern era design.

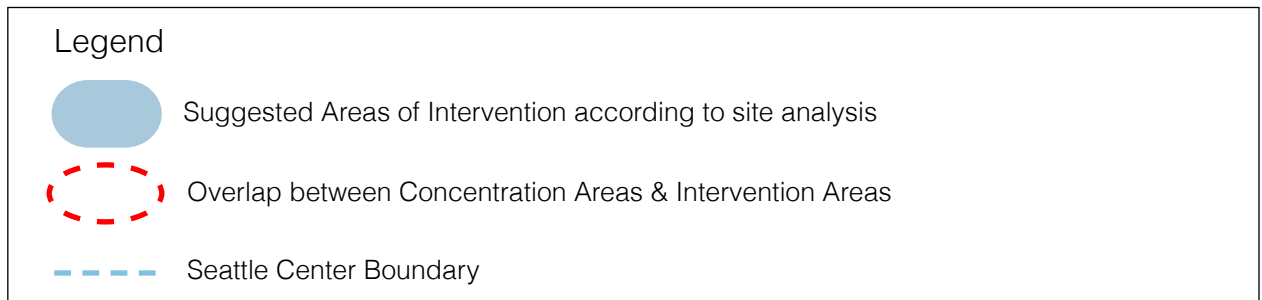
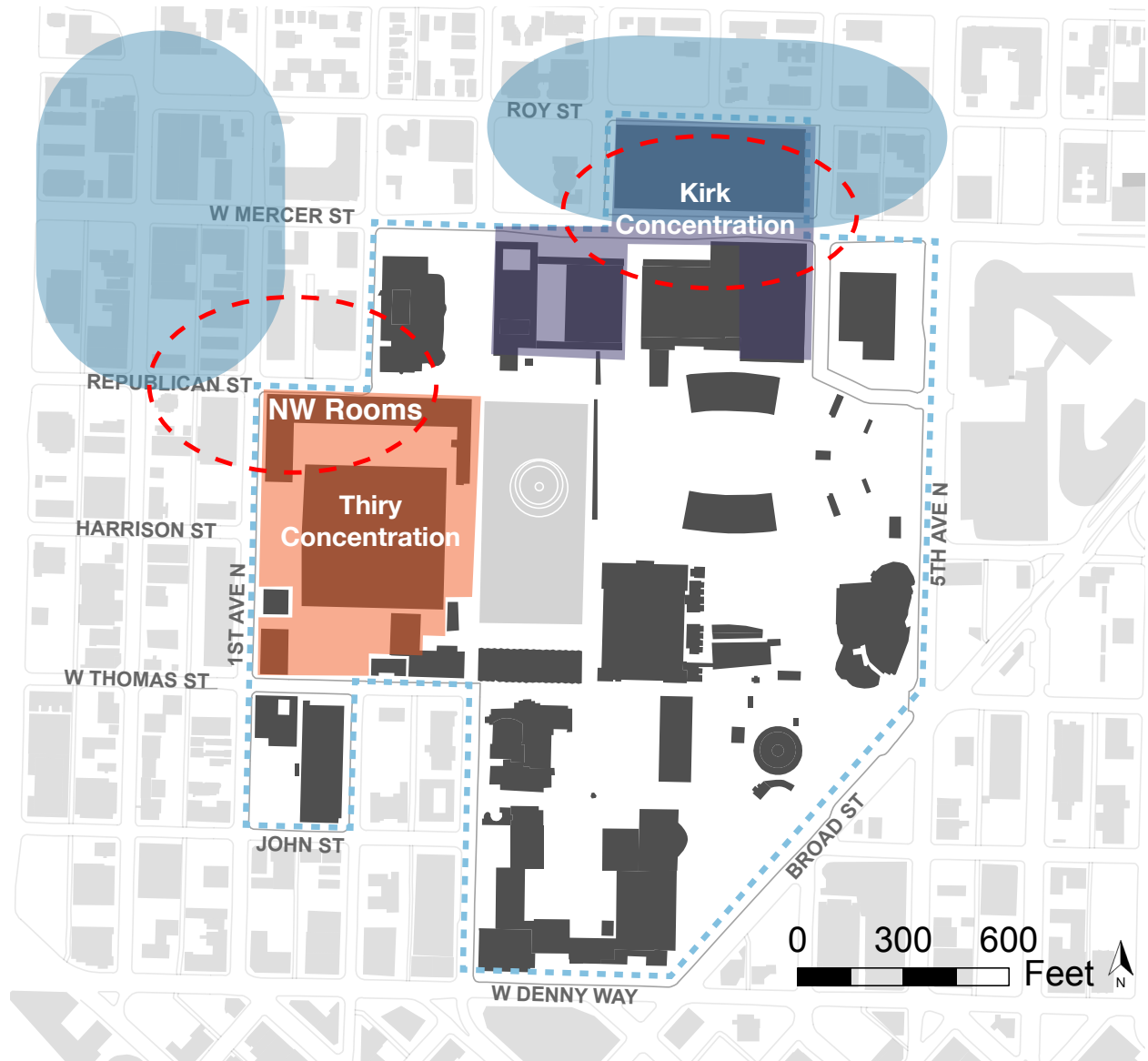


Figure 34: Priority Areas - Overlap; Source:: City of Seattle GIS Data, "Parcel Boundaries Delineated by King County & Parklands & Green Space." and Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center, Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study; Diagram: Katie O'Lone



Figure 35: Northwest Rooms - North Side of Building; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Northwest Rooms - N. Side*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.

### *Current Intervention to Reactivate: Northwest Rooms*

At one of the priority areas identified, Northwest Rooms, there is already an intervention taking place right now. KEXP, a local Seattle radio station is in the process of relocating to the Northwest Rooms.<sup>101</sup> The Northwest Rooms located at the northwest corner of 1st Ave. and Republic St. lies on a crucial edge of the Seattle Center campus adjacent to the designated Heart of Uptown and is a part of the Thirty Concentration area. Currently the building lacks street activation at the pedestrian level due to its large concrete walls and there is a needed connection to the adjacent Heart of Uptown area that contains several vibrant retail establishments and serves as an active core for the neighborhood (Figure 35).<sup>102</sup> The location of an entity such as KEXP will create more jobs and increase activity in the area.

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101 Tom Mara, KEXP Executive Director, September 27, 2011, post "We've Reached a Milestone!" *KEXP 90.3 FM Seattle*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://blog.kexp.org/seattlecenter>. (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6ZDz4fTjS>)

102 City of Seattle DPD, *Uptown UDF Background Report*.



Figure 36: Northwest Rooms - Awning and Break in Building; Source: O'Lone, Katie. *Northwest Rooms - N. Side*. Photograph. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.

The Northwest Rooms was originally an overarching protective structure designed by Thyry to hold free-standing national exhibits and was enclosed after the fair to be used as conference facilities. Some of the character defining features of the Northwest Rooms are: “footprint and massing, flat roof with overhanging corrugated steel decking eaves, concrete columns, exposed on interior and exterior, steel roof framing, painted concrete tilt-up walls with abstract round relief ornament and large expanses of glazing.”<sup>103</sup>

The plan that is currently under construction is intended to create a more transparent and inviting environment for pedestrians, which is an issue that the site faces today. I performed site observations on Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 4:00pm and Sunday, June 7, 2015 at 1:30pm. The winter day was 52 degrees and overcast, while the summer day was 73 degrees and sunny. Even though the weather conditions varied, on both days there were few pedestrians using the sidewalk adjacent to the Northwest Rooms on the north side of the building and no activity with the building itself besides a

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103 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. “Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study,” March 2013, 25-26.



Figure 37: Northwest Rooms - NW Corner of Building - Prior to Construction; Source: "Street View of Northwest Rooms." Google Maps, accessed June 10, 2015. <https://www.google.com/maps>.

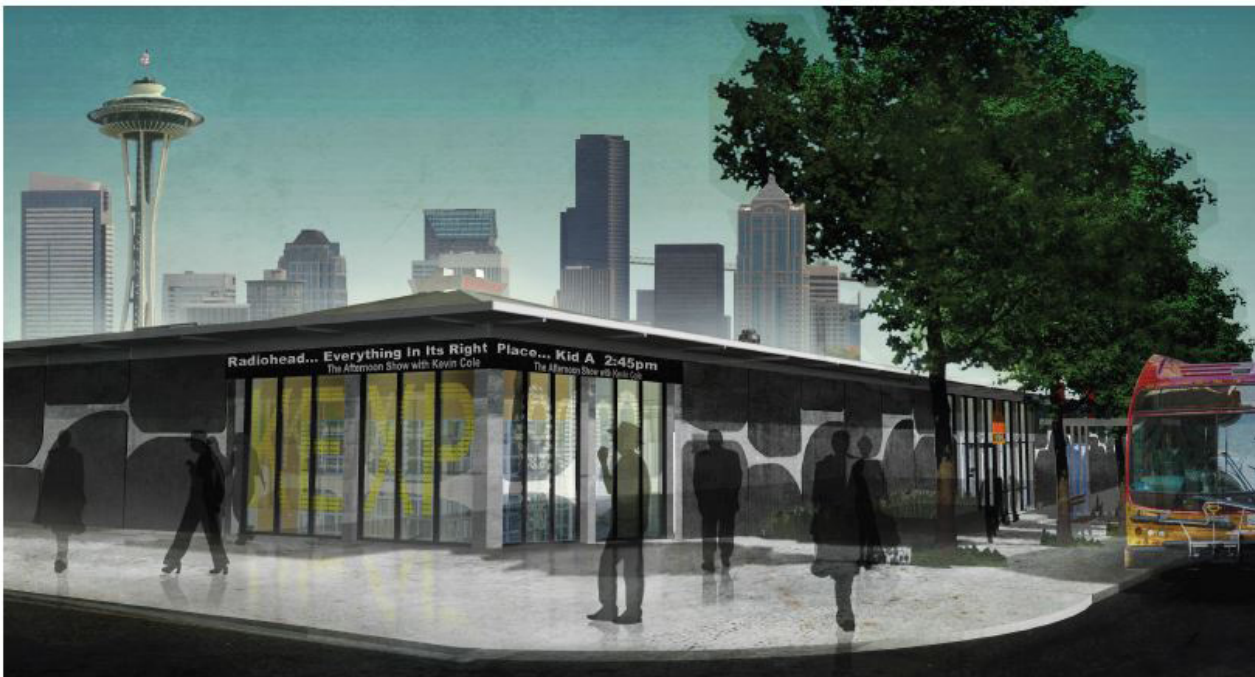


Figure 38: Rendering of Proposed 1st Ave. Corner of Northwest Rooms; Sources: SKB Architects. Rendering of First Avenue Side of KEXP Building. Rendering, n.d. <http://newhome.kexp.org/campaign-message/envisioning-kexps-new-home-2/>. (used without permission)

few people walking through break in the building (Figure 36). While the design directly addresses this Modern era design challenge by creating pedestrian activation at the street level, the proposal does impact the historic integrity of the building (Figures 37, 38). The design does maintain some character defining features such as the massing and roof line, but disrupts the concrete tilt-up wall with abstract round relief ornament at a prominent corner of the building and Seattle Center campus; Republican St. and 1st Ave.

If a historic district designation were in place then there would have been a design review process to evaluate how the new design would impact the historic integrity of the building before a Certificate of Approval would be issued. There could have been discussion on how to better integrate the abstract round relief ornament into the corner of the building while adding some transparent windows to open the edge. The abstract round relief ornament is particularly significant to the Seattle Center campus as many of the other Modern era buildings have a lack of applied decoration to their exteriors, making this corner a unique experience on the campus. In addition a design with less of a transparent corner could have still been successful, since the new programming of KEXP in the building will automatically draw a larger pedestrian population, since there will be a continual activity occurring in the building.

Certain aspects of the KEXP plan can be used as precedent for how to reinvigorate the edges of the Seattle Center to be more inviting and create a soft edge between the Center and the surrounding neighborhood. These include new programming that will attract pedestrians to the building and efforts to maintain some historic integrity of the building such as the massing and roof line. Lessons learned are that without a historic district designation unique examples of Modern era buildings and sites on the Seattle Center campus run the risk of having their historic integrity negatively impacted.



Figure 39: Concrete detailing on Mercer Garage; Sources: Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center, Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study. (used without permission)

### *Future Interventions to Reactivate: Roy Street Corridor & Mercer Parking Garage*

The other priority area identified was the Roy Street Corridor. Design intervention proposals set forth by the *Uptown Analysis + Intervention Report* respond to Roy Street being identified as a potential retail district with redevelopment opportunities such as the Mercer Street Parking Garage, but do not address the historic integrity of the parking garage. The Mercer Street Parking Garage is part of the proposed Kirk Concentration and character-defining features include the sculptured precast concrete panels designed by Charles Smith and fenestration (Figure 39).<sup>104</sup>

The Mercer Street Parking Garage is not always used to its capacity and experiences several design challenges due to its Modern era design. This was apparent in site observations that I performed on June 7, 2015 shortly before a performance was scheduled to begin at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall at 1:00pm. The two block parking structure has almost no street level pedestrian activity with three pedestrian entrances that mostly serve people that have vehicles parked in the garage (Figure 40). There

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104 Artifacts Architectural Consulting, HistoryLink.org, and Seattle Center. "Seattle Center Historic Landmark Study," March 2013.



Top Left: Figure 40: Mercer St. Parking Garage; Top Right: Figure 41: Mercer St. Parking Garage Sky bridge; Bottom Left: Figure 42: Mercer St. Parking Garage Roof; Bottom Right: Figure 43: Mercer St. Parking Garage Roof Community Garden; Source of all Photos: O'Lone, Katie. Photographs. Seattle, WA: June 7, 2015.

was only a small amount of pedestrians walking adjacent to the Mercer Street Parking Garage on the north side of Mercer St. and most appeared to cross the street to enter the Seattle Center campus. As mentioned before there was a performance scheduled at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall and many people were using the sky bridge to walk from the parking garage directly to Marion Oliver McCaw Hall (Figure 41). When walking in the parking garage many of the spots were empty, especially on the roof of the parking garage (Figure 42). The roof also contains a community garden, so there are already

efforts to use the parking garage structure in another capacity than just parking (Figure 43). All of these observations point to the Mercer Street Parking Garage as having a lack of pedestrian scale structures, lack of street activation at the pedestrian level and overall underutilization.

### *Proposals*

The *Uptown Analysis + Intervention Report* suggested three alternatives to developing the Roy Street corridor: Seattle-Center Focused, Community and Destination. These concepts incorporated three different approaches to redeveloping Mercer Street Parking Garage as well.<sup>105</sup> While the Northwest Rooms addresses a crucial corner between the Seattle Center and Uptown neighborhood reactivation of the Roy Street corridor would break a several block edge between the Seattle Center and Uptown. The first concept Seattle Center-Focused would encourage the development of uses, such as hotels and restaurants, that would support the Seattle Center. In this scheme the Mercer Street Parking Garage is proposed to be redeveloped into two mixed-use (parking and retail) structures. The garage would still serve as a place for parking for the Seattle Center while also activating the first floor and breaking up the two-block structure creating a more pedestrian environment.<sup>106</sup>

The second concept, Community, focuses on incorporating additional residences and neighborhood businesses. The Mercer Street Parking Garage would be redeveloped into two mixed-use (commercial and multifamily) complexes.<sup>107</sup> The third concept, Destination, encourages the redevelopment of the Roy Street corridor into a dining and retail destination with higher height allowances for buildings to create a more dense fabric. The Mercer Street Parking Garage is proposed to be completely eliminated and redeveloped into several mixed use buildings.<sup>108</sup>

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105 University of Washington Seattle Studio, "Uptown Analysis + Interventions Report: Preparation for Uptown Urban Design Framework," 63.

106 Ibid., 64-65.

107 Ibid., 70-71.

108 Ibid., 73-74.

Each of these concepts propose strong recommendations for activation of the corridor as a whole, but if Seattle Center was designated as a historic district prior to reactivation it would better guarantee that the historic integrity of the parking garage be maintained. Again a Certificate of Approval would be to issued in order to make changes to the building. As the Seattle Center was originally designed to allow for evolution of the site to meet the needs of the City it is appropriate to modify the two-block parking garage to allow for reactivation of the blocks especially since the garage is under used.

The first proposal offers the most balanced approach to preserving and reactivating the parking garage, since it maintains some of the garage while incorporating ground level activity. In addition, if the Seattle Center was a designated historic district the parking garage would likely maintain some character defining features. Unlike the Northwest Rooms the exterior of Mercer Street Parking Garage would have to be modified to accommodate a new use other than parking. This warrants a more flexible approach to preserving and reactivating the parking garage which could occur under a historic district designation since the site as whole instead of each individual building is evaluated for its overall historic integrity.

## V. REFLECTIONS

### *Preservation + Reactivation*

Currently the Seattle Center serves the primary function as a city civic center, but there is a missed opportunity for the Seattle Center to also serve as a neighborhood amenity. Creating design interventions along the edges of the Seattle Center as shown with the Northwest Rooms and Mercer Street parking garage while maintaining the historic integrity through a historic district designation of the site can address this issue.

Through this case study illustration specific challenges associated with the Modern era design can be best addressed by first preserving the site through a historic district designation then through reactivation. The historic district designation helps guarantee the preservation of a significant moment in time, the Century 21 Exposition, while allowing for site to continue to evolve as was the original intent. This can occur with more flexibility as historic districts are evaluated for their collective historic integrity, which is also appropriate since the Seattle Center was developed as a holistic site.

As for Modern era design challenges in Seattle Center, the issue of a decentralized campus layout must be addressed by the site holistically. This can occur through a series of design interventions at the edges of Seattle Center as were explored in the Northwest Rooms and Mercer Street Parking Garage sites. As the edge becomes more integrated into the surrounding neighborhood there is a gradual transition from a suburbanized campus to the more dense urban neighborhood surrounding it without disrupting the original intent of the Seattle Center as a civic campus. The lack of pedestrian scale structures and lack of street activation at the pedestrian level can be addressed on an individual block, building or site basis as displayed with the Northwest Rooms and Mercer Street Parking Garage.

The next step after achieving a historic district designation and addressing priority areas that need to be reactivated would be to identify second priority edge conditions that should be reactivated. A good starting point would likely be the three spaces between McCaw Hall, Exhibition Hall and the Cornish Playhouse courtyard discussed in the site observation section of the case study. Here Modern era design issues that need to be addressed are uninviting hardscapes and lack of pedestrian level activity.

From this case study illustration of the Seattle Center it is apparent that a holistic historic district designation is the best approach to preserve the site before reactivation. This would have significantly changed how the buildings and sites at the Lincoln Center in New York City were reactivated and likely prevented the loss of significant elements, such as the north plaza designed by Lawrence Halprin. Diller Scofidio + Renfro claimed that a crucial part of reinvigorating Lincoln Center was, "...to know the difference between the parts of it that always worked and may simply be out of fashion, and the parts of it that don't work at all and have to be fixed."<sup>109</sup> This is completely true, but without having preservation regulations in place the integrity of significant Modern era sites will always be at high risk of being compromised.

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109 Goldberger, "West Side Fixer-Upper: New Ideas for Lincoln Center That Don't Involve Dynamite."

# Historic American Landscapes Survey

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



# 2015 HALS Challenge

## Documenting Modernist Landscapes

The **Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS)** was created in 2000 to document our country's dynamic landscapes. Much progress has been made in identifying cultural landscapes but more is needed to document these designed and vernacular places.

For the 6<sup>th</sup> annual HALS Challenge, we invite you to document modernist landscapes unique to your region of the country. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, landscape architects responded to the regional environment using design as an agent of social change, creating human scale space, modern forms, and sculptural compositions, which were intended to be experienced rather than simply viewed.

The designs of renowned modernist landscape architects like Church, Eckbo, Kiley, Halprin, and Rose face developmental threats despite growing national awareness. The lesser known works of many other regional designers must be documented to encourage their preservation.

Robert E. Marvin, fondly referred to as the father of Southern landscape architecture, designed landscapes that celebrated the unique regionalism of the South Carolina low country, and Guy Greene, a pioneer in desert landscape architecture in Tucson, founded the University of Arizona's landscape architecture program. Which modernist landscape architect shaped your region?

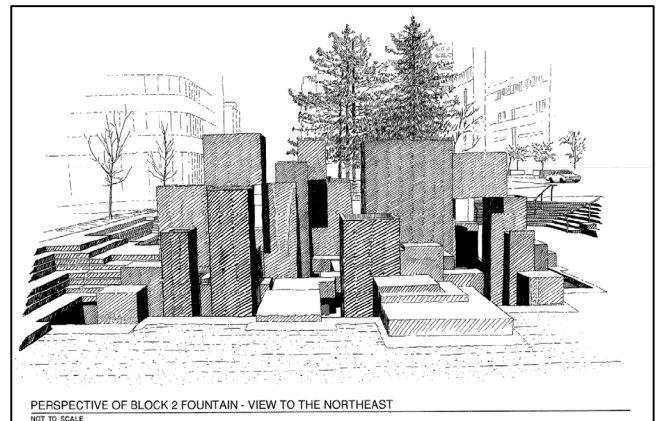
Many modern landscapes remain in all 50 states, but they may be unnoticed, their significance unappreciated. People from every state are hereby challenged to complete at least one HALS *short format history* to document these rapidly vanishing and often overlooked resources. *Preservation Through Documentation!*

**Short format histories\* should be submitted to HALS at the National Park Service no later than July 31, 2015. For more information, contact Chris Stevens, 202-354-2146, [Chris\\_Stevens@nps.gov](mailto:Chris_Stevens@nps.gov)**

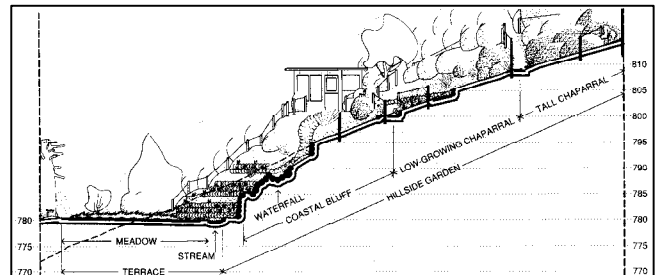
**Cash prizes\*\* will be awarded to the top 3 entries. See next page for tips.**

***"How do you design an environment where man can grow intellectually...a total environment that encourages and develops the self expression of every individual in it?"***

**–Robert E. Marvin**



**Skyline Park, HALS CO-1, Denver, CO**



**Fleming Garden, HALS CA-43, Berkeley, CA**



**Southwest Waterfront, HALS DC-856, Washington, DC**

\* HALS Short Format History guidelines, brochure and digital template may be downloaded from the HALS website: [www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/halsguidelines.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/halsguidelines.htm)

\*\* Winners will be announced at the HALS Subcommittee meeting at the 2015 Annual ASLA Meeting and Expo in Chicago. Employees of the National Park Service, American Society of Landscape Architects, and Library of Congress may submit HALS Short Format Historical Reports, but are ineligible for prizes.

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