



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649  
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 596/14

Name and Address of Property: The Theodora – 6559 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE

Legal Description: That portion of the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 4, Township 25 North, Range 4 East, w.m., in King County Washington, described as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of the South line of East 68<sup>th</sup> Street and West line of 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast as shown on the plat of Roosevelt Heights Second Addition, according to the plat recorded in Volume 33 of plats, Page 37, in King County, Washington, thence South along the West line of 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast, 234 feet to the North line of Block 5 of said Addition; thence West along the North line of said Block, 273.54 feet to the East line of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast; thence North along said East line 234 feet to the South line of East 68<sup>th</sup> Street; thence East along said South line to the point of beginning.

At the public meeting held on October 1, 2014 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of The Theodora at 6559 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction.*
- E. *It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.*

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **Site / Context**

The Theodora Home building is located at the southwest corner of 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast and Northeast 68<sup>th</sup> Street, in a residential neighborhood known as Ravenna. Long prior to its incorporation into Seattle, Ravenna was an area that was part of Lake Russell, which was formed from the Vashon Glacial Sheet 50,000 years ago. Green Lake is the remnant of Lake Russell. Green Lake drained into Lake Washington via the Ravenna ravine, which contained Ravenna Creek. Ravenna Creek was the predecessor of the path laid by Ravenna Boulevard.

The town of Ravenna was developed by Reverend William Beck, who originally platted the area. Beck also developed Ravenna Park and Seattle Female College. It was connected to Seattle via the Rainier Power and Railway Company streetcar, which ran up 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Ravenna Park, and on to Ravenna. Ravenna was incorporated into the City of Seattle in 1907, and developed quickly with the usual compliment of businesses, housing, churches and schools. The area, located close to the University of Washington, was known for drawing social reformers, and boasted the establishment of the Theodora and the Children's Home Society, both within a block of each other on 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Streets. Today it is a neighborhood bounded by 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Avenues on the west, by 25<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenues on the east, 75<sup>th</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the north and NE Ravenna Boulevard, NE Blakely and NE 45<sup>th</sup> Streets on the south.

Though most of Ravenna was incorporated into Seattle in 1907, the area that included the Theodora Home was not incorporated into the city until the 1940s. Prior to having the current Theodora Home, the site was occupied by a previous Theodora Home from 1914 to 1964. That building was supposedly named after a gentleman, Theodore, who was born on the property. When the original Theodora Home was constructed around 1913, it was the second of its kind in the nation to provide housing for dependent mothers and their children. The focus of the Volunteers of America changed in the mid-1960s, and the original building was torn down when the current Theodora Home was built in 1965, as a residence for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

Currently, the Northeast branch of the Seattle Public Library, a City of Seattle Landmark designed by Paul Thiry, is across the street to the north (built in 1953), the Congregation Beth Shalom Synagogue is across the street to the northeast (built in 1955) and the University Unitarian Church, designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, is across the street to the east (built in 1957). Single-family and multi-family buildings are located directly to the south (built in 1942 and 2001). Single family residences are located to the west and north (built in 1945 and 1948). Several Washington Children's Home Society buildings are located to the west between 32<sup>nd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> streets, and 65<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> streets. The nearest Children's Home Society building is directly to the west of the Theodora.

### **Site and Context Additional Information**

The site on which the Theodora Home is located was donated to the Volunteers of America by Marvin F. (M.F.) Jones. Marvin was a well-known Ravenna Heights neighborhood resident who donated money and land to several charitable causes, including the Washington Children's Home Society and the Girls' Training School. He was also known for hosting annual large Fourth of July celebrations for the Ravenna Heights neighborhood at his home. After his death, his wife Isabella, platted Roosevelt Heights in 1919 and the Roosevelt Heights Second Addition in 1930.

Prior to having the current Theodora Home building, the site was occupied by a previous building also called the Theodora Home from 1914 to 1964. The building was most likely named after Theodora Booth, the daughter of Maud and Ballington Booth, founders of Volunteers of America. The first Theodora Home opened on October 21, 1913 and was built for approximately \$12,000. The Theodora Home was the second of its kind in the nation to provide housing for dependent mothers and their children.

Gordon S. Clinton is a notable resident of the Theodora. His mother, Gladys Clinton, moved Gordon and his siblings to the Theodora after his father's death left them homeless and destitute in 1935. Gordon was Mayor of Seattle 1956-64.

### **Architectural Description**

The Theodora Home is a two story wood frame structure with partial basement, designed by the firm of Grant, Copeland and Chervenak. It is an 'H' shaped building with residential units on either leg of the 'H', organized with central corridors. The legs flank either side of a central two-story portion. The building was designed to provide housing units with access to natural light and views for all residents, as well as central eating and gathering spaces to foster community interaction.

#### Building Site

Per a site plan included with the drawings for the Theodora, the site included the original Theodora building, curb cuts on 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenues Northeast on the east and west side of the site, a drive that passed through the site from east to west, a planter to the south of the original building and other small site structures on the west side of the site. It appears that there may have also been a walkway, running east-west, near the south side of the site.

The site plan also shows limited plantings on the site, including four trees designated to be saved. Of those trees, two of them, a Douglas Fir and Bigleaf Maple, still exist. The Douglas Fir is located in a planting area between the central portion at the west wing of the building. The Bigleaf Maple is located at the southeast corner of the site. Today, in addition to the two trees mentioned above, the site has a mix of trees, including young Douglas Firs, mature Japanese and Vine Maples, European White Birches and other species.

#### Overall Building Design

The building was designed in a style consistent with Northwest Modernism, with its use of exposed wood, overhanging roof, strong relationship to the site and clean lines. The exterior skin includes stained wood, with strips of windows at the first and second floors, heavy timber beams that project from the building face at both floor levels, and a flat roof with projecting eaves. There are screens in front of the windows on the outside east and west faces. Those screens sit approximately 4 feet from the exterior face of the building.

The exterior design is similar to the Magnolia Library, which was designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, and opened in 1964. The Library has exposed heavy timber beams and projecting eaves. Kirk also designed the church across the street from the Theodora. Given these two facts, there may be a connection between Grant, Copeland Chervenak and Paul Hayden Kirk, but no evidence to support that has been found.

### East Elevation

The east elevation has a concrete lower level with two stories of wood construction above. A parking area and basement are located at the lower level. An angled concrete retaining wall provides partial enclosure of the area. The same style of low wall surrounds the planting area to the east of the entry to the parking garage. The first and second floors above the basement are occupied by residential units and have a north and south portion, symmetrically arranged around a central exterior deck element with an angled solid guard rail.

The north and south portions of the east elevation are delineated by stained wood veneer with a stained wood column simply delineated in the façade. Stained wood beams project from above the first and second floors. Each beam supports a stained wood column that extends in front of the façade. The wood skin at the north and south elements is broken by horizontal bands of windows. Glass screens sit in front of windows at the first and second floors. The screens are constructed of varying width glass panels with vertical wood supports, and a continuous wood frame element at the top and bottom.

### South Elevation

On the south elevation, the east and west wings extend beyond the center section of the building, and are terminated in stained wood cladding, with a glass storefront system at the center of each wing. The east wing also has screens in front of the storefront, similar to the ones on the east elevation. The center element between the wings is set back slightly, and has a glass storefront with double entry doors at the first floor and stained wood siding with an overhanging canopy at the second floor above. A low brick wall with a central opening extends in front of the center element, with a wood canopy above, supported by wood columns. The canopy and brick low wall run between the east and west wings. The brick is a flash fired or iron rust brick with a staggered pattern. South of the building, the site has surface parking. An entry drive comes from 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west, slopes down to the parking, then slopes down to 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the east, exposing a concrete retaining wall similar to that on the east elevation.

### West Elevation

The west elevation exterior cladding, windows and screens match those found on the east elevation. An exterior balcony with an angled low wall is located at the center of the second level, matching the low walls found on the east elevation, but the first level is located at grade, so only an exterior patio with brick paving exists there.

### North Elevation

On the north elevation, the east and west wings are terminated in stained wood cladding, with a glass storefront system at the center of each wing. The center element between the wings is set back slightly. The first floor of this element is glazed with a storefront and doors. The second floor has stained wood siding. A low brick wall extends in front of the center element, and runs between the east and west wings. It has a flash fired or iron rust brick with a staggered pattern. A similar style staggered brick wall is located on the east and west walls of the center element, at the first level.

### Building Interior

There were 116 units for residents when the building was originally designed, each with its own bathroom. They are located on the first and second floors of the east and west wings. Both wings have a central elevator, and egress stairs at the north and south ends. The corridors are painted plaster or drywall, and have a combination of carpet and concrete at the floor. The walls have stained wood chair rails and vertical elements. The ceilings are painted, with exposed, painted wood beams and surface mounted utilitarian light fixtures.

The units have painted walls and ceilings, carpet on the floors and some wood trim. There are radiators located in cabinets below the windows. The bathrooms have ceramic tile on the floor and a shower floor insert with ceramic tile at the shower walls. A simple wall mounted ceramic sink is located beneath a mirror with lighting above.

The center element between each wing has offices, dining room, lounge and commercial kitchen at the first floor, all which surround an atrium. Additional offices, which were most likely an original caretakers unit, are located on the second floor above the first floor offices. A concrete basement, located below the central area on the first floor and behind the parking, has utility and storage spaces.

Lt. Cols. John T. and Naomi O., officers of the Seattle branch of Volunteers of America, were in charge of the original building program. It would house 224 people in two-bed units. Recreational areas such as a library, kitchen & dining facilities, laundry, and storage would be provided on site for tenants.

The final plans were worked out by VOA officials and members of the agency's advisory board. Austin Grant, of Grant, Copeland & Chervenak, the architecture firm selected to perform the project, was president of this advisory board at the time.

### **Landscape / Architectural Relationship**

How the Grant, Copeland & Chervenak design integrates indoor and outdoor space is essential to its architecture, especially so given the building's social purpose of housing war veterans and people with disabilities. Here, one of the best aspects of Northwest Modernism — its relationship to site — provided residents with the health benefits of connecting with nature. The connection between the building's aesthetic and its social function is important.

The ways in which the Grant, Copeland & Chervenak design integrates indoor and outdoor space are subtle, multi-layered and classically modern. In several places surrounding the property, a rich sequence of elements work to modulate views to and from the building, including plantings, brick screens, garden courtyards, tree canopies and wood-framed transparent screens. These elements transition space, regulate light and shade, and buffer against surrounding urban elements without disengaging from them. In other areas, tree trunks set against dark stained wood exterior walls create beautiful compositions. These design aspects are central tenets of Northwest Modernism, seen also at Grant, Copeland & Chervenak's Winkenwerder Hall at UW. It is well-known that many Northwest architects from this period were influenced by Japanese architecture, and the Theodora's multi-layered indoor/outdoor transition is a fine example of that influence and an integral aspect of its design.

Part of the Theodora's therapeutic nature was its peaceful and extensive landscaping. The courtyard gardens offered a window on the healing processes of nature to people forced to stay confined to a room, wheelchair or tight physical radius. The entryway showcases the gardens, emphasizing their importance to the complex's therapeutic purpose. The nicely thought-out brick screen walls and extensive landscaping, too, were conceived to be restorative. They provide shade, changing patterns of light and shadow, shelter for wildlife, and sound insulation. Courtyard designs also provided aural insulation from noises emanating from 35th Avenue NE.

The Theodora’s entry sequence is also notable, and typical of many great Northwest Modernist buildings. The entrance is recessed deep within the “H” plan, flanked by residence wings and courtyards on either side. A long timber framed canopy marks the entry and transitions across an arcade, brick screen walls and shaded courtyards. That the entry highlights one of the building’s greatest design features — its interior/exterior transition and connection to the site — makes it significant. The journey through the entry sequence also brings into focus the building’s interesting construction details and joinery, again suggesting a Japanese influence (vis-a-vis Northwest Modernism) on Grant Copeland & Chervenak.

### **Changes to the Building**

The building is highly intact, with few significant changes over time. The layout of the building and units is unchanged, including the wood siding and the screens at the building exterior. There have been some modifications, as listed below. It is likely that the unit restrooms and finishes have been altered, though there is no record of that. Below is a list of changes that have been made per Seattle Department of Planning and Development records.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
Repair of Existing Common Decks	1997
Add Sprinkler System to Building	2002
Boiler Replacement	2006
Various Mechanical and Electrical Modifications	1999-2005
Replace Aluminum Windows with Vinyl Windows	no date

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Architectural Style**

The architectural style of the building is best described as Northwest Modern or Northwest Regional. The style occurred mostly between 1935 and 1960, though this time period is debated, with the time period ending anywhere from the 1950s to the 1970s. Paul Thiry advocated that there was a Northwest regional style in the 1950s, but Victor Steinbrueck did not concur until the 1960s. Regardless of the time period, the Northwest Modern style is based on the International Style, which had uninterrupted building lines without details that referenced earlier architectural styles. The style typically utilized northwest materials such as wood, both on the interior and exterior, had open plans, particularly at the public spaces, and integrated the building into the landscape.

Similarity between Theodora and other local Northwest Modern buildings can be seen most obviously in two buildings shown within this document, the Magnolia Branch of the Seattle Public Library, opened in 1964 and designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, and the Winkenwerder Forest Sciences Lab at the University of Washington, built in 1964, also designed by Grant, Copeland and Chervenak. Other buildings designed by Grant, Copeland and Chervenak, which would be considered Northwest Regional, include the Bloedel School of Environmental and Forest Sciences Lab, as well as Christ the King Church in Bellevue and St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Seattle. The church buildings were constructed with elements of the Northwest Regional style, but don’t have the strong formal character that was exhibited by either the Theodora building or the Winkenwerder Forest Sciences Lab.

## Architect

Grant, Copeland and Chervenak began their practice in 1955. The firm was started by Austin Grant, who, having been raised in Seattle, began working for his father, William R. Grant, in Seattle after World War II. Once his father retired in 1953, Austin took on partners, and the firm was renamed Grant, Copeland and Chervenak.

Ross W. Copeland Jr. was born and raised in Seattle. He attended the University of Washington from 1935 to 1938, but didn't receive a degree. He worked for Harry Nordquist, and then at the Todd-Pacific Shipyards in Tacoma from 1940-45. After World War II, Copeland worked for firms including George Stoddard and Associates, Bain, Overturf & Turner, and Young & Richardson. After receiving his architectural license in 1946, he formed a partnership with Marvin Patterson. This partnership did not last long, and in 1954 he joined Austin Grant, and formed the partnership known as Grant, Copeland and Chervenak.

Robert A. Chervenak was born and raised in Tacoma. He graduated from the University Of Washington School Of Architecture in 1951. In 1955, he became a partner at Grant, Copeland and Chervenak. In addition, to his practice, Mr. Chervenak was an associate professor at the University of Washington from 1960 to 1974.

Grant, Copeland and Chervenak (GCC) were known for designing many buildings around the region, most notably churches, but also two forest sciences buildings at the University of Washington, Psychology Building at Central Washington University, a King County Medical Services Corp. building, a hospital building in Brewster, Washington, Fire Station 27 on South Myrtle Street and single family residences. Many of their buildings featured wood exteriors, with some having exposed wood heavy timber beams.

In 1965, they won an Honor Award from the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for the King County Medical Services Corporation Building. Located at Terry and Howell Streets in downtown Seattle, the building received an upper floor addition at some point. Nationally, GCC won an Honor Award from AIA in 1966 for the Hugo Winkenwerder Forest Sciences Laboratory, which was constructed in 1964. The Laboratory is designed on a 12 foot module. It has exposed wood and glass screens, similar to those on the Theodora. An adjacent building, the Forest Sciences Building (now the Bloedel Building) was designed by GCC and built in 1971.

The firm's church design experience was extensive. DOCOMOMA-WEWA.org, the website of the organization dedicated to the support of Northwest modernism, indicates that GCC designed over 350 church buildings. The buildings include Christ the King Church in Bellevue (built sometime during or before 1956), Saint Paul's of Shorewood Lutheran Church in Seattle (1958), Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Everett (1968), a Seattle Chapter AIA award winner, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Olympia (1969), Pilgrim Lutheran Church (1968, possibly in Bellevue). In addition, they designed Saint Peter's Episcopal Church in south Seattle, which was built in 1961, and received a 1963 Seattle Chapter AIA award. They also designed an education building for Luther Memorial Church in Greenwood in 1961.

Though GCC designed many churches, only a minimal direct architectural relationship can be drawn between the church designs and the Theodora design. The churches listed above were designed with wood exterior faces and would possibly be considered of the Northwest Regional Modern style, but none of them have Theodora's exposed wood structural beams or columns on

the exterior. They may have exposed wood at the interior, but Theodora does not have wood as a prominent interior feature.

Only the Winkenwerder Lab and Bloedel Building, on the University of Washington campus, could be considered stylistically similar to Theodora, with strong horizontal lines accentuated by exposed wood structure and glass screen elements on their facades.

Less was published about GCC's single family residential experience, but an Edmunds house that they designed was published in the Pacific Northwest Living section of the June 1959 issue of the Seattle Times. This house also appears to bear the hallmarks of Pacific Northwest Regional design, with wood siding and exposed wood beams.

It is not certain when the firm disbanded, but the last mention of them in the Seattle Times is in 1973. Given the type of work and awards, the firm was well published and probably well known in the Seattle area.

### **Structural Engineer**

The structural engineer who stamped the structural drawings was Harvey Dodd. He was born in 1922 in Fort Supply, Oklahoma to Isaac Jackson and Anna Dodd. He was a civilian who assisted in salvaging ships after Pearl Harbor, then enlisted in the Navy. He received a Civil Engineering degree from the University of Washington, and later became a Structural Engineer. He was active as a civil and structural engineer in Seattle, and was best known for structural design on the Space Needle and Kingdome. He opened his firm, Harvey Dodd and Associates in 1960. He was a member of the Structural Engineers Association of Washington, and was their president in 1971.

It is interesting to note that Harvey Dodd was not the only one who stamped the structural drawings for the Theodora set. They were also stamped by Austin Grant, who was the architect for the project.

### **Contractor**

In a Seattle Times article from June 28, 1966, Baugh Construction Company was listed as the contractor for the Winkenwerder Forest Service Lab, but no contractor name could be found for the Theodora building. Baugh became part of the Skanska USA Building after 2000.

### **Volunteers of America**

The Volunteers of America (VOA) is one of the largest organizations in the country to provide housing and assistance to persons of low income, including those with disabilities, throughout America. It was founded in 1896 by Ballington and Maud Booth. Ballington was the son of General William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army. The VOA, a faith-based organization, began their philanthropic efforts in the early 1900s. By the 1960s, they changed their focus to housing for the poor. The VOA is still in operation today. They are an Alexandria, Virginia based organization that serves 46 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico.

It was founded in 1896 by Ballington and Maud Booth. Ballington was the son of General William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army. His sister, Evangeline Booth, would go on to



become the 4<sup>th</sup> general of the Salvation Army, and its first female General. Ballington and Maud's children, Theodora and Charles Booth, were involved in the Volunteers of America, and other charity and philanthropic works. Theodora founded the Girls' National Honor Guard with Agnes Smith in 1917. The organization's mission was primarily war relief work for young women. After Maud's death in 1948, Charles became head of the Volunteers of America.

Articles of Incorporation for the Seattle Charter of the Volunteers of America, dating from 1921, indicate the original corporation was led by 7 directors, to be appointed by the VOA's national board of directors. The first board included: Ballington Booth & Walter J Crafts, both out of NY. Local members included Frederick A Lindsay, JE Crichton, Everett Smith, Cleveland Kleihauer, and Edward Kilbourne.

Of those members, J.E. Crichton was a City Councilman of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ward from 1892-1908. Cleveland Kleihauer was a prominent pastor with the University Unitarian Church and oversaw the construction of the church at the corner of NE 50<sup>th</sup> St and 15<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. Edward Kilbourne built a streetcar connecting Fauntleroy and Downtown Seattle, and was a majority owner in Union Electric Company, which received the franchise from the city to restore power after the Great Fire of 1889.

The VOA provides a wide range of services for low income seniors, but it appears that the Theodora Home is only one of two buildings that the VOA owns and operates in western Washington. However, the VOA also has housing for women and children in Eastern Washington, and over 200 sites at other sites throughout the country. As mentioned in the Site/Context and Architectural Description above, the VOA constructed a Theodora Home on the site in 1914. It was one of the first in the nation to house dependent mothers and children. The first Theodora Home was torn down for construction of a new Theodora Home in 1965, which housed low income elderly and disabled persons. This is the Theodora that exists on the site today.

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*The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: the site; the exterior of the building; and the first floor interior court, library, dining room, lounge and fireplace.*

Issued: October 9, 2014

Karen Gordon  
City Historic Preservation Officer

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