



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

### **REPORT ON DESIGNATION**

LPB 369/16

Name and Address of Property: Seattle City Light Power Control Center /  
System Operations Headquarters – 157 Roy Street

Legal Description: Legal Description: Lots 5 and 6, Block 13, Mercer's Addition to North Seattle, according to the Plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, Page 171, in King County, Washington.

At the public meeting held on June 15, 2016 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of Seattle City Light Power Control Center / System Operations Headquarters at 157 Roy Street 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.*
- F. *Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.*

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### **Location and Neighborhood Character**

The original sign on the building called the System Operation Headquarters the Power Control Center. The building is located on a prominent corner lot one block north of Seattle Center in the Uptown/Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. The blocks between Mercer and Roy Streets from State Route 99 (Aurora Avenue North) west to Third Avenue West serve as a commercial

buffer between the multi-family residential buildings and single family residences on the south slope of Queen Anne hill. The hill falls steeply from Valley to Roy Street along the same stretch where it becomes nearly level. Roy Street also forms the northern edge of the Uptown Center as defined in the City of Seattle's 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Two of the four alternatives being evaluated (July 2015) in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan separate Uptown from downtown, but apparently do not expand its borders. The Uptown Alliance, a neighborhood advocacy group, is proposing (fall 2015) with the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development in its *DRAFT UPTOWN Urban Design Framework* that the Power Control Center be part of an arts district zoning overlay and that the Roy Street portion of the Mercer/Roy Corridor should be redeveloped with residential uses.

The character of the neighborhood surrounding the Power Control Center is mixed: institutional, playful, commercial and residential. Immediately to the south the northern edge of Seattle Center, the 75-acre park developed for the 1962 Century 21 Exposition, creates a distinctive institutional tone whose buildings along Mercer and Republican Streets offer some disquieting walls that turn their backs on the Uptown neighborhood. Even the recently reconstructed McCaw Hall fails to remedy the barrier between Seattle Center and the neighborhood. The International Fountain Pavilion and the one-story buildings of the Northwest Rooms along Republican Street are designated City of Seattle landmarks. Radio station KEXP has recently (1/2016) adapted the northwest end of this facility for studio and performance spaces. These changes purport to open up Seattle Center to the neighborhood. Just east of the subject site a small park and the temporary buildings and tent of Teatro Zinzanni add a playful note to the neighborhood's character. Southwest and west of the Power Control Center is the Uptown commercial center marked by one and occasionally two-story commercial buildings dating from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The Marketplace, a commercial development, fills the entire block just west of the site. The three story building includes a basement garage, a large grocery store and a variety of smaller shops served by a parking lot on the upper story. The Expo apartment building and the office tower called Queen Anne Station (listed in the National Register of Historic Places), diagonally facing one another at the intersection of Republican Street and First Avenue North, are modern exceptions to the historic one and two-story character of the Uptown neighborhood. As with many of the neighborhoods designated for intensive redevelopment in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan, the Uptown neighborhood is seeing the construction of many modern buildings that are altering its historic character. Fortunately, the brick veneer of the Marqueen Hotel at Queen Anne Avenue between Roy and Mercer Streets, built to house mechanics training Ford Assembly Plant at South Lake Union, contributes dramatically to the historic character of the neighborhood. Noteworthy in the context of the Power Control Station is the 1963 St. Paul's Episcopal Church whose dramatic A-Frame construction echoes the geometric experimentation apparent in the design of the Power Control Center and so many of the key and surviving buildings of the 1962 Century 21 Exposition such as the Space Needle, Pacific Science Center, the Monorail (all three designated Seattle landmarks), Washington State Coliseum (the Key Arena).

### **Site**

The site occupies 15,360 sq. ft. or 25% of the block which slopes from Warren Avenue North to Second Avenue North between Roy and Mercer Streets. The site slopes from west to east with the eastern edge approximately 10 feet below the western one. The eastern wing

cantilevers over a portion of the parking lot which occupies the eastern half of the site. A plain concrete wall, the surviving element from the substation, lines the driveway along the southern boundary of the site. This wall is topped by a screen, consisting of 34 panels mounted on individual posts whose zigzag design on their south facing side echoes the chevron pattern in the spandrels of the windows of the office portion of the building. The northern side of each panel is flat. A small gap separates the panels, which taken together provide a welcome decorative element to the site. The consistent use of an exposed aggregate finish of polished stones on all but the glazed services, the repetition of the colorful zigzag pattern in the spandrels and the decorative wall along the southern, northern and western edges of the western octagonal wing supported by attractive landscaping helped unite the elements of this unique structure.

### **Building Structure & Exterior Features**

The Power Control Center is a one-story steel reinforced concrete structure with two independent wings. The western wing sits on a basement whereas the six-sided eastern wing is supported on eight concrete pilotis allowing parking below. In 1963, the two wings were connected through a small rectangular passageway. The original octagonal building was built of 24 four-ton four by twenty foot panels that lean inward and support the roof. A set of three panels forms each of the eight equal sides of the original octagon. Each of the sides is separated by an aluminum trough that serves as a recessed downspout. The troughs end a few inches above a drain cover set flush with the surrounding yard. In 1985, the three southern sides were enclosed during an expansion that introduced a trapezoidal window in a recessed panel on the western façade, extended the side parallel to Warren Avenue with three panels identical in material and size to the original three on that elevation. Although the addition more than doubled the width of the western elevation, it added very little additional interior space to the building. All of the pre-cast panels of the original octagon and the 1985 addition are identical. Each one sports a highly articulated exposed aggregate finish of polished stones that decorate the panels and mollify the otherwise austere forms. The concrete panels are constructed of two layers, forming a filling-free sandwich cast offsite in Everett. A decorative outer layer with large polished stones is attached to the inner structural layer with conventional pea sized aggregate. An octagonal hip roof without any interior support protects the octagonal wing. A gable roof covers the six-sided office wing. The original octagon had no windows or exterior doors. Access to the octagon is through the adjoining office wing. Smaller panels matching the slabs of the octagon cover the angled north and south end walls of the office wing which measures approximately 34 feet by 80 feet. On the east elevation, a raised concrete surround contains seven large picture windows that light an open reception area and a conference room. A multi-colored zigzag panel is set below each window. At the ground floor level off the parking lot, double metal entrance doors are mounted between the two central pilotis. The Power Control Center's main entrance is located on the west elevation of the office wing. This elevation has three bays, which extend to the north from the wall connecting the center's two wings. The entrance to the building is recessed within the center bay. The adjoining bays have windows whose multi-colored zigzag spandrels match the ones on the eastern elevation. A flight of stairs leads from the recessed porch to a small landscaped area between the two halves of the building, where a second set of stairs continues down to the sidewalk. These stairs are set in a low concrete retaining wall, which surrounds the larger western half of the site on three sides. A ramp, added in 2002 when City Light rented the

octagonal space to Easter Seals, is neatly folded between the stairs and the northern edge of the octagon provides handicap access to the entrance. The building's footprint documented on the city's ArcGIS mapping system best shows how the parts of the building relate.

### **Plan & Interior Features**

The building's footprint as shown on the city's AiGIS mapping system shows the relationship between the office and power control wings of the building. It is, however, the multiple layers of the Power Control Center that add richness to its design. The office parallelogram sits on pilotis that define parking places below and between the central pair an entrance leads to the basement. Above along the northern perimeter of the office segment, there are two private offices flanking an open reception area and a conference room on the eastern edge. The western edge of the office wing includes small storage rooms and a kitchen. A hallway divides the office wing and leads to the octagonal room once dedicated to power control. The 1985 addition removed the central panel of the southern wall, but left the basic octagonal form intact. The addition to the basement contained redundant HVAC, telephone and electrical generating equipment. On the main floor, the addition created three small rooms one of which contains the recessed window wall. The freestanding curvilinear inner wall located on the western side of the octagonal room has no structural function. It once held pin light patterns that tracked the flow of electricity around the city. Backlit panels fill the entire ceiling whose abstract shapes were among the most interesting decorative features of the building. Nearly all of the interior fixtures have been removed.

An octagonal basement follows the plan of the upper western level. It includes a number of storage spaces as well as rooms dedicated to making the building operate independently in the case of a serious emergency: redundant heating, cooling, electricity generating and telephone switching gear are all available.

### **Documented Building Alterations**

As noted previously, City Light expanded the octagonal portion of the building in 1985 to accommodate Transmission and Generation Operations as well as Resource Scheduling. The expansion did not significantly enlarge the control room level of the building adding three small rooms. The basement expansion provided additional space for redundant HVAC, telephone and electrical generating equipment. The 1985 expansion respects the integrity of the original design, although the small garden on the southern façade between the two buildings was lost. When the building opened only the southern edge of the site was fenced. Subsequently, a variety of fences enclosed the northern and western sides of site. They were ultimately replaced between March 2012 and May 2014 by a black "wrought iron" aluminum fence that prevented camping on the site by homeless people. Ironically, the building reopened in late 2015 as a shelter for 100 homeless men over the age of 60.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Introduction**

This landmark nomination provides information regarding the architectural design and historical significance of the System Operation Headquarters at 157 Roy Street. Even though an early undated draft of architectural drawings calls the building the System Operations Headquarters, by September 1962 architectural drawings rename it the Power Control Center. That name appears in City Light's 1962 Annual Report) long before the building opened in October 1963, on the sign on the northern façade proclaimed and throughout this nomination. The building is in the Uptown/Lower Queen Anne neighborhood in Seattle, Washington. Michael J. Herschensohn, Ph.D., prepared this nomination for the Queen Anne Historical Society with the assistance of Leanne Olson and Nicole Demers-Changelo, members of the society's board and its Landmarks Preservation Committee.

### **Background**

Architects Harmon, Pray & Detrich carefully set this architecturally distinctive modern structure on its prominent corner site in Uptown. The octagonal form of the building's western half allowed for the installation of a large semicircular "pin board" diagram of the city's entire electric system which kept operating personnel informed of power distribution in the city at all times. In 1985, an addition to the original western wing of the building changed it from a regular octagon into an eight-sided polygon. To the east, the adjacent six-sided office portion of the building is cantilevered over eight concrete pilotis separating parking spaces below. The creative and unusual pairing of eight and six-sided forms is a noteworthy feature of the Power Control Center which is not only an exceptional example of the modern movement, but also of the unique blend of European and American design traditions that flows from Louis Sullivan to Frank Lloyd Wright and which is clearly seen in the work of Bruce Goff such as the Japanese Pavilion at LACMA and other Southern California mid-century architects.

The stark precast concrete panels and their octagonal form echo futuristic designs of Seattle's Century 21 Exposition and the efforts of American designers to break free of European design and create a uniquely American vocabulary. Designed in 1962, the year of Seattle's Century 21 Exposition, the Power Control Center reflects the futuristic enthusiasm of the fair that survives today in two designated city landmarks, the Space Needle by John Graham and Victor Steinbrueck and Minoru Yamasaki's Pacific Science Center. If John Findlay's concept of Western magic kingdoms (e.g.: Disneyland, Century 21) did in fact, "exert substantial influence over both the surrounding metropolis and the nation," then the Power Control Center required by the construction of the road to the future (I-5) and lying literally and figuratively in the Space Needle's shadow is a significant example of it.

The site's association with the late 19th century era of Seattle's privately owned electric utilities is an important part of site history as is the rivalry between Puget Power and City Light and the political tug of war between people favoring public versus private ownership utilities. The building reminds us that Seattle City Light is the 10th largest public utility in the United States and the first municipal utility in the country to own and operate a hydroelectric facility. The building further reflects Seattle City Light's evolution as the sole supplier of Seattle's electric power and its early 20th c. founding as part of the city's progressive rejection of East Coast industrial oligarchies.

City Light constructed this now retired Power Control Center in 1962-63 on the site of a previous distribution substation built in 1926 by Puget Sound Power & Light Company as part of their private electric utility operations within the City of Seattle. In 1951, following a city-wide referendum approving the purchase Puget Sound Power & Light all the Seattle assets, City Light acquired the Queen Anne distribution substation at the intersection of Warren Avenue North and Roy Street near today's Seattle Center. The construction of I-5 required the demolition late in the summer of 1963 of City Light's original power control center which had been housed at the former Yesler Substation at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Yesler Way. A site City Light had used since 1905. In response to the freeway construction, City Light chose to reuse the subject site and to relocate the Power Control Center there. The architecturally distinctive building was designed to harmonize the many new buildings built for the 1962 Century 21 Exposition, in which City Light had been an enthusiastic participant. The Power Control Center entered seamlessly into service on October 1, 1963. The building's austere octagonal form has generated the urban myth that it was constructed as a bomb shelter to protect City Light workers from a nuclear disaster, but neither architectural drawings (there is no lead in the building's walls) nor City Light literature (Annual Report) mentions this use. Although the upbeat tenor of these documents would have surely trumpeted such a feature, a promotional brochure published in the mid to late 1960's by Harmon, Pray & Detrich points out that the windowless concrete walls were designed to protect workers from 'fallout.' City Light continued to use the 157 Roy location as the Power Control Center from 1963 through 1995. The new location in Ballard opened in September 1995. In 1985, the sympathetic extension south of the octagon on the main floor and expansion the basement were designed to remodel and expand the interior to create space for the Transmission and Generation Operations as well as Resource Scheduling. In 2006-07, 11 years after the PCC moved out of the 157 Roy location, it was considered for an Emergency Operations Center, but nothing came of it. City Light converted the building to community purposes in 2002 and rented the octagonal portion to the not-for-profit Easter Seals. More recently, the city adapted the building as a shelter for homeless older men. Permits for alterations and repairs show almost all the work limited to interior changes. The shelter opened in late 2015.

### **Historical Site Context: Queen Anne**

The community of Queen Anne is one of Seattle's oldest residential neighborhoods. Pioneer settler Thomas Mercer first called the forested, water-lapped district Eden Hill. By the mid-1880s, the growing suburb had acquired the name Queen Anne Town in reference to its showy domestic architecture. The character of this thoroughly urban neighborhood today is the result of several key influences, both physical and human.

Natural features have both encouraged and restrained the development of Queen Anne over time. Waterways at the base of the hill virtually assured adjacent industrial growth from an early date. At the same time, steep topography limited the spread of large-scale commercial and industrial land uses on the hill itself. Instead, the south and west facing sides of the hill became attractive as an early residential suburb because of its spectacular territorial and water views and its relative accessibility to the city.

Queen Anne was linked to Seattle by public transit in the late 1880s. The advent of electricity served as one of the most important defining events of the neighborhood. Electricity powered streetcars whose routes fostered rapid platting, intensive residential construction, and the

eventual emergence of multifamily housing – all within a brief forty-year period of time. Unsurpassed views and Queen Anne’s close-in location including proximity to South Lake Union, the offices of the Gates Foundation and the Amgen -- soon-to-be Expedia -- site on Elliott Bay continue to foster high real estate values.

Queen Anne’s character has been shaped as much by its human resources as by its physical features. The fact that progressive, well-educated families made the neighborhood their home from the outset has left a lasting legacy. Over the years, residents have consistently and successfully pushed for a myriad of municipal improvements.

Community activism in more recent decades tempered the effect of intensive urban development after World War II, including construction of the Century 21 complex in 1962 at Seattle Center. In the post Great Recession period (2011 to the present) a significant amount of urban redevelopment (largely in response to market forces and the Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan’s designation of Lower Queen Anne/Uptown as an urban center and the top of the hill as an urban village) is having a transforming impact on neighborhood character. Although the 2005 historic context statement claimed that the overarching goal of the neighborhood remained the preservation of its vibrant, human-scaled sense of place, this conclusion may no longer be accurate.

### **Electrical Power and Queen Anne**

The advent of electrical power at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century constitutes a major element in the history of Queen Anne. Street lighting, electrical fixtures in homes and easy inexpensive movement around the city by the streetcar railways created the suburb that Queen Anne became. Consequently, the story of electrical power and the companies that provided it, both private and municipal, is an integral part of the neighborhood’s historic context in general and a critical part of the history of the Seattle City Light’s Power Control Center and its site.

### **The Rivals: Puget Power and Light and Seattle City Light**

Between 1886 and 1899, Seattle was served by a variety of privately owned "neighborhood electric companies," since the direct current then in use could be transmitted only short distances. New alternating current technology favored after the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair soon made it possible to serve larger areas. By 1900, Stone & Webster Engineering Consulting Company, a Boston-based utility holding company had consolidated the small competing companies into the Seattle General Electric Company. Stone & Webster had a virtual monopoly controlling Seattle street lighting, electric utilities and the street railways on which it held an exclusive contract between 1901 and 1941. (HistoryLink.org Essay 1657). Street railways throughout much of the western part of the state and for which Stone & Webster subsidiaries provided all the electric power, constituted a large portion of the company’s activities. By 1919, however, competition with the automobile modified the company’s focus on electrical power and transmission. At that time, it consolidated all its activities as the Puget Sound Power and Light Company. Around the time of World War One, Stone and Webster sold many of its inner city streetcar lines to municipal agencies retaining control only of longer distance lines such as the Everett to Seattle Interurban that it actually ran over rails rented from the city of Seattle.

On March 4, 1902, Seattle residents made an important decision that would shape the future of power supply for the city: they approved a \$590,000 bond issue to develop a hydroelectric

facility on the Cedar River. It was the beginning of public power in Seattle — public and private systems would compete in the city until 1951 — and the nation's first municipally owned hydro project. The decision of the people to fund a public utility reflects shifting attitudes apparent in national laws such as the Sherman Antitrust Act ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherman Antitrust Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherman_Antitrust_Act)) which were designed to prevent monopolies and which led ultimately to the total purchase of Puget Power Seattle assets in 1951 (including the site of the Power Control Center).

Between 1902 and 1951, the two electricity providers often had lines running down both sides of streets and customers could choose the one to serve their homes and businesses. During this 40-year period, Puget Power continued to supply the electricity to the street railways while the site at Warren and Roy served as an electricity distribution point.

Cedar Falls first generated power in 1905 under control of the City Water Department. But the plant performed so well and demand for municipal power rose so dramatically, that the Seattle City Council created a separate lighting department Seattle City Light on April 1, 1910.

Electricity from Cedar Falls was transmitted to a sub-station at 7th Avenue and Yesler Way which over time became the predecessor to the electrical tracking equipment later in the Power Control Center at N. Warren Avenue and Roy Street. City Light employees tracked the operation of the electrical system city wide from that the 7<sup>th</sup> and Yesler site until the construction of I-5 in the early 1960's required the station's demolition.

The Progressive decades (1890-1916) closed with the near completion of Queen Anne's major infrastructure – plats filed, streets laid out, sewer and water systems in place, and major parks established. Defining physical features such as the Lake Washington Ship Canal, the Counterbalance, Queen Anne Boulevard, and the campus of Seattle Pacific University were in place. A clear pattern of commercial development had emerged, with residential shops and services along streetcar lines, especially on top of the hill, and the emergence of light industrial use on lower Queen Anne.

### **The Neighborhood between World War I and the 1962 Seattle World's Fair**

Queen Anne was already a well-established district by the time the U.S. entered World War One. Many individual lots were still undeveloped, but only a few large tracts remained undivided on the wooded north slope of the hill. No major new plats were recorded for ten years after 1916, until the final phase of subdivision on the hill began in 1926 in Queen Anne Park an example of the tremendous development that occurred in Seattle in the 1920s. In the 1920s, easy streetcar access to downtown encouraged the construction of a significant number of multi-family apartment buildings in Uptown and on the south facing side of the hill, anchored a large working class population to Queen Anne.

Improvements to the infrastructure proceeded with some regularity through the 1920s. In 1923, Elliott Avenue was completed all the way from downtown Seattle to Fifteenth Avenue W. at Interbay, making it a primary north-south arterial on the west side (Queen Anne-Magnolia News Almanac 1996). Even though automobile ownership increased dramatically during this decade, most people still walked or traveled by streetcar around the city. In the 1920s, Queen Anne continued to enjoy the four streetcar lines in place since 1905 (including the Counterbalance on Queen Anne Avenue). To get to Ballard, residents walked down the hill to catch a car at Fifteenth Avenue W.



During the late 1910s and 1920s, commercial districts on Queen Anne Hill took on much of their character, present form and dimension. The commercial enclave at the foot of Queen Anne along Mercer and Roy streets, between First Avenue W. and Queen Anne Avenue, was built out with one-story brick shops and stores. These buildings filled in the vacant spaces between light industrial concerns and apartment house uses. At least one small businesses from this period, the Mecca Café still operates.

The 1929-1945 interlude of economic depression and war was deeply experienced on Queen Anne Hill, but without any lasting contributions to the built environment. Public works projects, including the Aurora Bridge, the North Queen Anne Drive Bridge, the Armory at what became Seattle Center, and the network of pedestrian stairs and pathways are the primary physical legacy of that difficult period.

At the close of World War II, real estate and construction in Seattle boomed along with Boeing after the War. The city annexed extensive land to the north with stores lining commercial arterials and block upon block of rapidly built residential development to either side. After World War II, the City and the Seattle School District made some physical refinements to public parks and playfields on Queen Anne. Having used Civic Field for football games ever since it's opening in 1928, the School District purchased the field for one dollar and enlarged its seating capacity to 12,000. It re-opened as High School Memorial Field in 1948 and continues to host high school sporting events today.

### **The 1951 Buyout**

In 1951, Seattle voters approved another milestone in city history — buy-out of privately owned competitors' Seattle territory by Seattle City Light. Seattle at last had a unified power system. The primary competitor, Puget Sound Power and Light had built the first electrical generating plant in the region at Snoqualmie Falls in 1898 and constructed power distribution centers throughout the city. Among many others, Puget Power had constructed a redistribution center on the southeast corner of Warren and Roy where City Light ultimately constructed the Power Control Center in 1963.

The City of Seattle together with the emerging suburbs around it sought to respond to this rapid growth with the establishment in 1958 of METRO, a regional transit and sewage treatment agency, which was followed by construction of the Interstate-5 freeway. The construction of the freeway caused the relocation of the power control station from 7th Avenue and Yesler Way to Roy Street. At the same time, to reaffirm the importance of downtown Seattle as heart and soul of the growing region, Seattle leaders determined to host another world's fair – the Century 21 Exposition. This ambitious project put Seattle on the international cultural map and created a new cityscape at the foot of Queen Anne Hill (Sale 1976, 196-201; Findlay 1992, 264).

### **The 1962 Seattle World's Fair**

The 1962 Seattle world's fair was perhaps the most transfiguring single event in the history of Queen Anne. Downtown fair organizers looked to the existing Civic Center complex, for several good reasons. The Auditorium, the Armory, and Memorial Field already served as citywide venues for dances, concerts, and athletic events. The location was easily accessible from downtown. Further, the area surrounding this complex had grown shabby. The “Warren Avenue slum” contained some of the oldest housing stock, apartments, and commercial

buildings in the city. Redeveloping this neighborhood would further the city's goals of reducing slum and blight around the downtown and was consistent with urban renewal policies trumpeted around the nation at the time (Findlay 1992, 223-234).

Eventually, seventy-four acres of land originally platted as D.T. Denny's Third Addition (1880), and D.T. Denny's Home Addition (1889) -- including the swale known by Native Americans as baba'kwoh--were incorporated into the fairgrounds. Within its boundaries all but the Armory, Nile Temple Building, Civic Opera House, Civic Ice Arena, Stadium and Veteran's Hall were removed. Among those torn down were the Warren Avenue School and Fire Station No. 4.

An interesting feature of the ordinance creating Century 21 Exposition Inc., the primary organization responsible for construction of the fair, gave it the power of eminent domain over the properties required for the fair and the obligation to never sell the land acquired. The company apparently used its powers of eminent domain to take the Warren Avenue School and its large playground making those sites which lie at the heart of the fairgrounds subject to the founding ordinance. Oddly though, the ordinance did not affect the Space Needle which replaced Fire Station No. 4. In fact, Century 21 Exposition never acquired the fire station site, for it was already in public hands and which, as surplus city property, was sold to a private corporation which constructed the landmark Space Needle, a design of John Graham, Jr. and Victor Steinbrueck.

Paul Thiry, Seattle's most prominent Modern school architect designed the grounds and many of the key fair structures including the Washington State Coliseum (housing the World of Tomorrow exhibit and remembered for the Bubblelator elevator) that occupies much of the site of the Warren Avenue School. Thiry served as the primary architect for the design of entire campus. He reviewed and approved any aspect he did not design. Thiry along with John Graham, Jr. and Ewen Dingwall (Vice-President and Executive Director of the Century 21 Exposition and Executive Director of the Seattle Civic Center Advisory Board) was among those who visited Anaheim and took cues from Walt Disney and his work there.

Other new structures at the fairgrounds included the acclaimed United States Science Pavilion designed by Minoru Yamasaki and NBBJ; the Space Needle; the International Fountain by Tokyo architects Hideki Shimizu and Kazuyuki Matsushita; and the popular Monorail, by the Swedish company Alweg. Existing buildings were remodeled for new use. The Opera House was created within the shell of the old Civic Auditorium, and the Armory was transformed into the Food Circus.

With the support and attention of the Boeing Company, the U.S. Government, and the Bureau of International Expositions in Paris, organizers soon agreed that the overarching theme of the fair would be American progress in science and space. The city engaged prominent architects and artists to create a futuristic, thoroughly modern complex, with buildings and landscape features devoted to demonstrating new technology. Designers from Disneyland and from Northgate Shopping Center including John Graham, Jr., helped to lay out the grounds on principals of order, logic and cleanliness (Findlay 1992, 215, 244). Findlay notes that the, "Century 21 Exposition also called upon designers of special landscapes for help in laying out the fair (Findlay 244)." They turned to the designers of malls, especially Seattle's innovative Northgate Mall and Disneyland that Findlay calls, "something of a shopping mall (Findlay, 244)." James B. Douglas of Northgate and Walt Disney himself were consulted. Fair staff

made numerous trips to Disneyland as they developed Century 21. (Findlay documents these trips. See footnotes 83, 84, 85 and 87, Findlay, pp. 363 and 364). Both the fair's Skyride and the Monorail were developed by the very firms that produced similar rides in Anaheim. Many key staff members of Century 21 were before and after the fair employees of Disney in California. Findlay notes that the Space Needle became the most famous survivor of Century 21. As Findlay says, its "colors of astronaut white, galaxy gold, reentry red and orbital olive, hardly missed a trick (Findlay, 248)." Speaking internationally, Findlay is correct; however, the Pacific Science Center, the Northwest Court, the Monorail (all three designated Seattle landmarks), the International Fountain, and the Washington State Coliseum (aka Key Arena) are important local survivors of the fair. Findlay believes the fair's suburban mall-like organization failed to revitalize the city as planners intended. "Nonetheless, the Century 21 Exposition, like other magic lands, succeeded in bringing maturity and identity to a city in the throes of rapid expansion (Findlay, 264)." Findlay does not address Disney's debt to early 20<sup>th</sup> century world's fairs; however, the debt is apparent and would explain why relying on his work in California made sense. It had become an axiom of urban planning in America. It followed from the planning of the fair that Disney's Imagineers would have been hired in 1989-90 to redesign what was perceived then as obsolete Seattle Center grounds. Although many of the Imagineers ideas were rejected by the city, a good number have been executed and significantly revitalized the grounds.

The Century 21 Exposition ran between April and October of 1962. When it closed, nearly ten million visitors had attended the event. Its physical legacy remains today on the well-used grounds of the Seattle Center, still a vital part of Queen Anne, Seattle and the region.

The post-war era was a time of change, especially felt on Queen Anne in terms of density and scale. The emergence of the high-rise apartment, the beginnings of business consolidation, and construction of the three television towers atop the hill were signs of the times. The Century 21 Exposition forever changed the cityscape of the lower hill, and marked a transition into the turbulent decades that followed.

### **After the Fair**

After the fair, social unrest and demographic shifts of the 1960s and 70s affected some areas of Queen Anne Hill, while other enclaves remained physically intact. Local, regional, and national economic swings of the final decades of the century were discernible in the intensity of construction in the neighborhood. Boeing lay-offs in the 1970s, wealth-building in the '80s, the dot.com boom in the '90s, and the recession of the first decade of the 21st century can be traced in the ebb and flow of development and redevelopment activity.

Public improvements of these more recent decades have made significant contributions to continuing the quality of life on Queen Anne. In 1968, the City's Forward Thrust bond issue was the catalyst for some much-needed park improvement. The Queen Anne Recreation Center was completed in 1972. Five years later, the Queen Anne swimming pool designed by Benjamin McAdoo, Jr., Seattle's first successful African-American architect, opened. Forward Thrust funds expanded the West Queen Anne Playfield and development of Mayfair and "Bhy" Kracke parks.

After the world's fair, the complex at Seattle Center was given over for use as a city- owned cultural and recreational facility. Over the years it has evolved and improved to become a

vibrant gathering place. Both distinctive new construction and extensive rehabilitation of existing buildings have occurred.

In the period during which the city converted the fairgrounds into an unusual community gathering place, City Light built the Power Control Center. The dramatically different structural elements of this building echo the exceptional structural achievements of the fair including the Space Needle, the Coliseum and the Pacific Science Center among others. Century 21's California connections resonate here as do the phenomenal experiments in civil engineering such as the Space Needle, the Coliseum and the tilt walls of the Northwest Court.

The construction of I-5 through the Seventh Avenue and Yesler Way substation created the need for the building, while the availability of the former Puget Power site made the corner of Warren and Roy an easy choice particularly because construction could be completed before I-5 came barreling through downtown.

The Bagley Wright Theater, home of the Seattle Repertory Theater, was completed in 1983. The Coliseum was upgraded after 1991 as the Key Arena as the result of a county-wide referendum. The Opera House, which had been developed from the original Civic Auditorium, has again been completely remodeled into McCaw Hall, which opened in 2004. The Seattle Children's Theater moved to the new Charlotte Martin Theater, and a greatly enlarged and delightfully imaginative Children's Museum took over the entire ground floor of the Armory. Seattle Center remains the long-running venue for three well-established major festivals: Northwest Folklife, Bumbershoot and the Bite of Seattle, as well as uncounted smaller festivals. Pacific Science Center, once the United States Pavilion for the 1962 world's fair, became a private non-profit science and education center, which has expanded twice.

Seattle Center's vitality has been sustained by the construction of the Fisher Pavilion (2000) and the Skateboard Park (2010), the reconstruction of the International Fountain, and the Northwest Court where the Alki Room has become the Film Center of the Seattle International Film Festival, the Snoqualmie room, the Vera Project, and the suite of spaces west of Warren Street, home to radio station KEXP. On the eastern edge of Seattle Center remarkable architectural additions to the neighborhood include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation by NBBJ on the site of the former Seattle Transit garage, Paul Allen's Experience Music Project by Frank Gehry, the Grass Wall west of the EMP and, most recently in 2015, Timpin and Judy Cantwell's imaginative playground that replaced the tired Fun Forest.

The eastern edge of the neighborhood retains but one pre-World War II apartment building at Mercer and Fifth Avenue North, some homes from before World War I, now converted to restaurant use, and a few mid-20th century light industrial buildings. Otherwise, new buildings on Mercer and Roy Streets west of Nob Hill have redefined neighborhood character. Underway now (2015), a huge transformation of street infrastructure is having a dramatic impact on the commercial portions of lower Queen Anne. Roy and Mercer streets became once again two way streets while access to the neighborhood from I-5 was transformed as Mercer Street increased from a four-lane one-way street going east to a two-way eight lane road that passes under SR99.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, the Queen Anne community began to protest the increase in high-rise apartment development on the hill. Citizen groups, particularly USSR or United South Side Residents, formed to halt the alarming loss of neighborhood character and views

and successfully strengthened permit requirements for future projects. More intense commercial growth along Mercer Street and west of the Seattle Center continued through the boom years of the 1990s. It was during this wave of new development that the Hansen Baking Co. complex, an adaptive re-use dating from 1974, was lost to new construction. The construction of the Marketplace on the baking company's site altered significantly the immediate neighborhood surrounding the Power Control Center. In more recent times, the surrounding area has been affected by the change in function of the three other buildings on the block (gas station/garage abandoned and turned into a parking lot, vacation of the small office building at the southeast corner and the adaptive reuse of the Color Press printing company building into Seattle Center's maintenance shop which it shares with Cornish School of Arts scene shop.)

Intense development pressure helped to mobilize the historic preservation movement on Queen Anne during the 1970s as well. Older homes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century began to be newly appreciated for their unique qualities, and many restoration and rehabilitation projects were initiated. The Queen Anne Historical Society was founded in 1971 to showcase the community's heritage. Since the mid-1970s, over 50 individual buildings, parks and structures in the Queen Anne neighborhood have been designated as City of Seattle Landmarks (Kreisman 1999, 53-58).

### **Historical Architectural Context: The Modern Style**

Modernism is a broad term that is given to a range of design approaches in architecture. Generally, Modern architecture in the Pacific Northwest is defined by buildings constructed from about 1930 to 1970. Most historians can agree that Modern architecture was conceived as a reaction to the perceived chaos and eclecticism of the early 19th Century revival of historical forms. The Modern Movement began in Europe in the 1920s as an optimistic belief that science and the new technologies of industrialization would produce a genuine "modern age" architecture of universal principles. Much of this revolutionary philosophy emanated from a core group of designers and artists in Europe such as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. The Power Control Center and its site much like Le Corbusier's 1929 Villa Savoye and his Cité de Soleil in Marseilles integrate the requirements of the automobile age by including parking under the building between the pilotis supporting the office segment of the center.

The evolution of Modern architecture began with the "International Style," a term coined in 1932 by an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The influential exhibition highlighted aspects of European architecture of the 1920s which represented a new direction and attitude towards architectural form. The first principle, "Architecture as Volume," dealt with the creation of space by floors of a columnar structure, which allowed for flexibility in plan. The second principle, concerning regularity rather than axiality, stemmed from the structural ordering of the building. The third principle mandated the avoidance of applied decoration which was seen as an attempt to eliminate superficiality.

Despite the exhibition and recognition by the architectural community in the United States, these new design principles were limited by lingering provincial tastes and the debilitating impacts of the Depression. However, in the years following World War II, Modern architecture in the United States became a widespread ideological approach. Unprecedented economic prosperity, combined with a renewed availability of materials, new construction methods, and

technical innovations, sparked a building boom across America, and Modern design reigned supreme. True to the origins of the Modern Movement, many mid-century architectural achievements were often experimental in their goal, using design to change the environment of everyday life.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, Oregon's Pietro Belluschi and Paul Thiry in Seattle (known as the "father of modernism" in Washington), had already gained national recognition for designing significant Modern buildings before World War II. With the war over, the post-war economy and the population boomed in Washington State (jumping from 1.7 million in 1940 to 2.3 million in 1950, to 3.1 million by 1970).

Capitalizing on the large demand for architectural designs during this time were a plethora of newly arrived young and eager architects who brought with them the latest architectural fashions and modes of thinking. In Washington, the group included architects such as Paul Hayden Kirk, Paul Thiry, Roland Terry and others.

Harmon, Pray & Detrich who founded their firm in 1948, obviously learned from this group and embraced the clean lines of Modernism for their work. The hard edges of the Power Control Center's two very distinct geometric forms are mitigated by the highly articulated polished stone aggregate of the panels, the many colored zig zagged spandrels and the multi-paneled chevron shaped screen wall along the driveway. These decorative features clearly mitigate any Brutalist influence, place the building in the larger tradition of Mid-century Modern design and underscore the influence of futuristic design borrowed from the buildings of the 1962 Century 21 Exposition.

The power and the success of Craig Harmon, Roland G. Pray and Robert Detrich of the Power Control Building design is revealed by the near religious respect shown to it by the architects of the 1985 addition, Harthorne, Hagen, Gross. The panels of the addition match exactly the ones cast in 1963. The elegant trapezoidal window in the west wall added in 1985 delineates cleverly between the original panels and the new.

### **Building Owner: Seattle City Light**

In 1902, Seattle residents made an historic decision that shaped the future of power supply for the city: they approved a \$590,000 bond issue to develop a hydroelectric facility on the Cedar River. It was the beginning of public power in Seattle— public and private systems would compete in the city until 1951— and the nation's first municipally owned hydro project. Cedar Falls first generated power in 1905 under control of the City Water Department. The plant performed so well and demand for municipal power rose so dramatically, that on April 1, 1910, the Seattle City Council created a separate lighting department, Seattle City Light.

In 1911, the new electric utility found its future in the vision of its second superintendent, the legendary J.D. Ross, often called the "Father of City Light." A self-taught engineer with boundless enthusiasm, Ross envisioned the day when the waters of the Skagit River would be harnessed for Seattle by a series of three dams. Today, although Seattle City Light has broadened and diversified its resources, these dams are still the heart of our water storage and generating facilities.

In 1951, Seattle voters approved another landmark in Seattle City Light's history — buy-out of the privately owned competitors' Seattle territory. Seattle at last had a unified power system.

The 50s and 60s were a go-go era of modernization and expansion: more generating capacity at existing facilities, new substations and improvements to the power distribution system. The new Boundary Dam and powerhouse in Northeastern Washington began operation in 1967.

In the late 60s and 70s, three factors began to chart new directions for Seattle City Light: unprecedented demand, environmental concern and drought. A major drought hit the area in 1977 and more were ahead in the 80s. Overnight conservation became a high priority energy policy. With funding from the Bonneville Power Administration, Seattle City Light launched a series of programs that has made the utility a national leader in conservation. Today, the Pacific Northwest is moving from a period of energy surplus to energy deficit, and conservation is Seattle City Light's first priority for developing new resources. Conservation is competitive with developing new resources, has minimal impact on the environment and creates a potential for vast savings.

Seattle has always enjoyed an abundance of power at some of the nation's lowest electrical rates. During the 80s keeping rates stable and broadening our sources of supply became key priorities. Regional power contracts brought new power from British Columbia, the Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts and the Olympic Peninsula. In 1988 the new Lucky Peak hydro project in Idaho, producing about four percent of our load, came on line. Regional ventures such as these not only control costs, but reduce our dependence on power purchased from the Bonneville Power Administration.

In recent years, environmental concerns have had a major impact on Seattle City Light operations. This was typified by an historic 1991 agreement for the federal relicensing of our Skagit River Hydroelectric project. Following 14 years of studies and negotiations, Seattle City Light signed an agreement with a diverse group of state, federal, tribal and environmental groups for a \$100 million mitigation package which will improve fisheries, wildlife, recreation, cultural resources and the visual environment near our Diablo, Gorge and Ross dams.

Today the people of Seattle City Light are known for responsive customer service, responsible citizenship and the lowest-cost, most reliable electricity in urban America.

### **Building Architect: Harmon, Pray & Detrich**

The work of the firm Harmon, Pray & Detrich included several important commissions—mainly offices for large corporations and governmental entities. Known projects include the King County Administration Building (1971); Sieg Hall (1960) at the University of Washington; Fulmer Hall addition (1961) at Washington State University; Materials Handling Building, Boeing Airplane Company, Seattle (1955); headquarters for Puget Sound Power & Light Co. (1957; destroyed) in Bellevue and subsequent switching stations around the Puget Sound; the Operating Engineers “Local 302” Building (1958) in Seattle; the master plan for the expansion of the East Capitol Campus in Olympia and subsequent designs for the Employment Security Building (1962), the Highway & Licenses Building (1962), and the State Archives Building (1963), Four Freedoms House retirement home, Seattle (1963-64); a multi-story addition to the Snohomish County Courthouse (1964) in Everett. The Puget Power Eastside Switching Station completed prior to the Power Control Center and largely filling the same purpose for Puget Power made Harmon, Pray & Detrich a logical choice for this job. The firm's office at 2230 8th Avenue Seattle (1963) with its aggregate panels, faceted concrete

columns and simple industrial lines is an unusually clear articulation of the architectural vocabulary Harmon, Pray & Detrich favored.

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Roland Gilbert Pray (June 18, 1908 - December 23, 1996) attended school in Lake City, Iowa before receiving his B.S. in Architectural Engineering from Iowa State College in 1932. He began his professional career at the Iowa Civil Works Administration, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service in Yellowstone, Wyoming. He also taught construction skills to men enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corp in Gurnsey, Wyoming. Other early design experience included stops in Denver, Colorado and Forth Worth, Texas before moving to Seattle in 1943. Pray received his architectural license in 1946, while working at Boeing. He then went to work for a short time with Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johanson before establishing a lasting and successful partnership with fellow architect Craig Harmon and engineer Robert Detrich in 1948.

Craig A. Harmon (December 10, 1911-May 1976) was born in Redfield South Dakota. He received an architecture degree from the University of Denver (1932-1935) and a civil engineering degree from the University of Nebraska (1937). Harmon was employed by Smith, Hinchman & Gryllis in Detroit between 1941 and 1942, by Wyatt C. Herrick in 1943 and by the Boeing Airplane Company from 1943 to 1946, where he was a plant engineer. From 1946 to 1948, he was a partner in Hehne & Harmon prior to joining with Pray and Detrich in 1948. Harmon died in Seattle.

Little is known of Robert Carl Detrich (March 17, 1916-February 1977). He was a graduate of Purdue University (Seattle Times 2/17/77). He was elected president of the Seattle Chapter of Professional Engineers in 1952 (Seattle Times 6/8/52) and resided in Seattle at the time of his death (Seattle Times 2/17/77).

### **Building Contractors**

#### **R. B. Miles Construction Company**

Zoning: SF

Property Size: .3526 acres; 15,360 s.f.

Building Size: 12,122 s.f.



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**The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:** *The site, the exterior of the building, and the former exterior concrete panel walls at the building interior.*

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Sarah Sodt  
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