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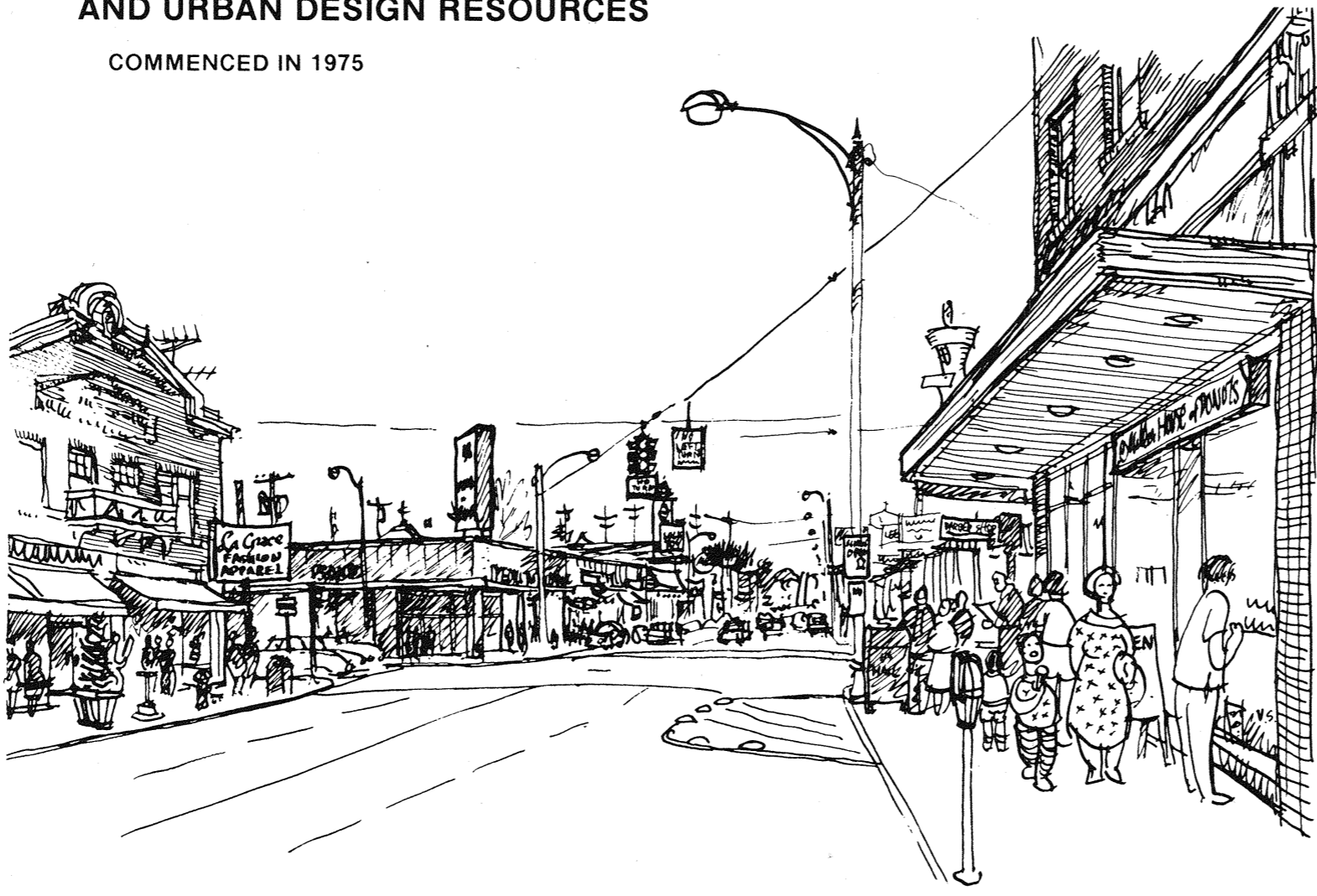
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ALKI / ADMIRAL

AN INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS AND URBAN DESIGN RESOURCES

COMMENCED IN 1975



HISTORIC SEATTLE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CONSULTANTS: FOLKE NYBERG  
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URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS

Alki and Admiral are endowed with a magnificent natural urban design setting. Surrounded by pleasant beaches and including forested slopes with numerous fine viewpoints, the area possesses natural amenities few other communities can rival. The manmade aspects of the environment, while much less spectacular, in many instances have not destroyed the area's natural assets. Large portions of the beaches are dedicated parks. Much of the wooded slopes remain in their natural state and the spectacular views are seldom blocked by high-rise development. However, steps must be taken if these resources are to remain intact. The Shorelines Management Act needs to be enforced to protect

the waterfront, and special care should be taken in any high-rise development to avoid blocking views or detracting from existing neighborhood qualities. The wooded slopes will also be prone to development pressure and these delicate landslide-prone areas must be carefully managed.

The character of the flat, central portions of the Admiral district vary markedly from the naturalistic setting of the northern, eastern and western slopes. The California Avenue commercial strip dominates this area and serves as West Seattle's activity focus. The grid-iron street pattern used over such a large and homogeneous area has resulted in many monotonous residential streetscapes.

Blocks of similar builders' houses reinforce this quality but also add a continuity and an identifiable, if mundane, character. Where street trees have been planted in continuous blocks, they improve the streetscapes, suggesting that coordinated street tree planting would be a viable way to upgrade these areas' visual qualities. Another opportunity for enhancement exists in the many publicly-owned street ends that terminate in fine views. A few benches, clean-up work and perhaps some lighting or modest pavement could transform these street ends into fine public viewpoints to be enjoyed by the neighborhood residents without private view property.

**A ALKI BEACH PARK** A most important waterfront park for the city and the community. Includes panoramic views, landscaping, public monuments and a bike path.

**B BIRTHPLACE OF SEATTLE MONUMENT** Marking the site of the Denmy party's landing in 1851, it is one of Seattle's most important monuments. Erected in 1905.

**C STATUE OF LIBERTY** The original in New York was presented by R.H. Parsons and the Seattle Council of Boy Scouts of America.

**D SCHMITZ PARK** One of the few places in Seattle where the site of its original virgin forest is still possible.

**E SCHMITZ PARK BRIDGE** A Works Progress Administration project completed in 1936, it is an excellent bridge design possessing fine concrete workmanship.

**F HAMILTON VIEWPOINT** There are spectacular views of the city and especially the Central Business District from this pleasantly landscaped park.

**G HIAWATHA PLAYGROUND** A fine community facility attracting and serving residents from all age groups.

**H WOODED SLOPE** Such woodlands are important visually and they add to the area's naturalistic qualities as well as offering a refuge for local wildlife.

**I DEPRESSION ERA HOUSE GROUP** Long blocks of similarly scaled and designed houses are common in the center of the Admiral district.

**J RANCH HOUSE GROUP** The long, low profiles of ranch houses obstruct views less than taller houses, and they are sometimes pleasantly oriented to fit the topography.

**K STREET TREES** Where planted in uniform groups street trees do much to relieve the monotony of unbroken residential areas. They suggest an obvious neighborhood improvement concept.

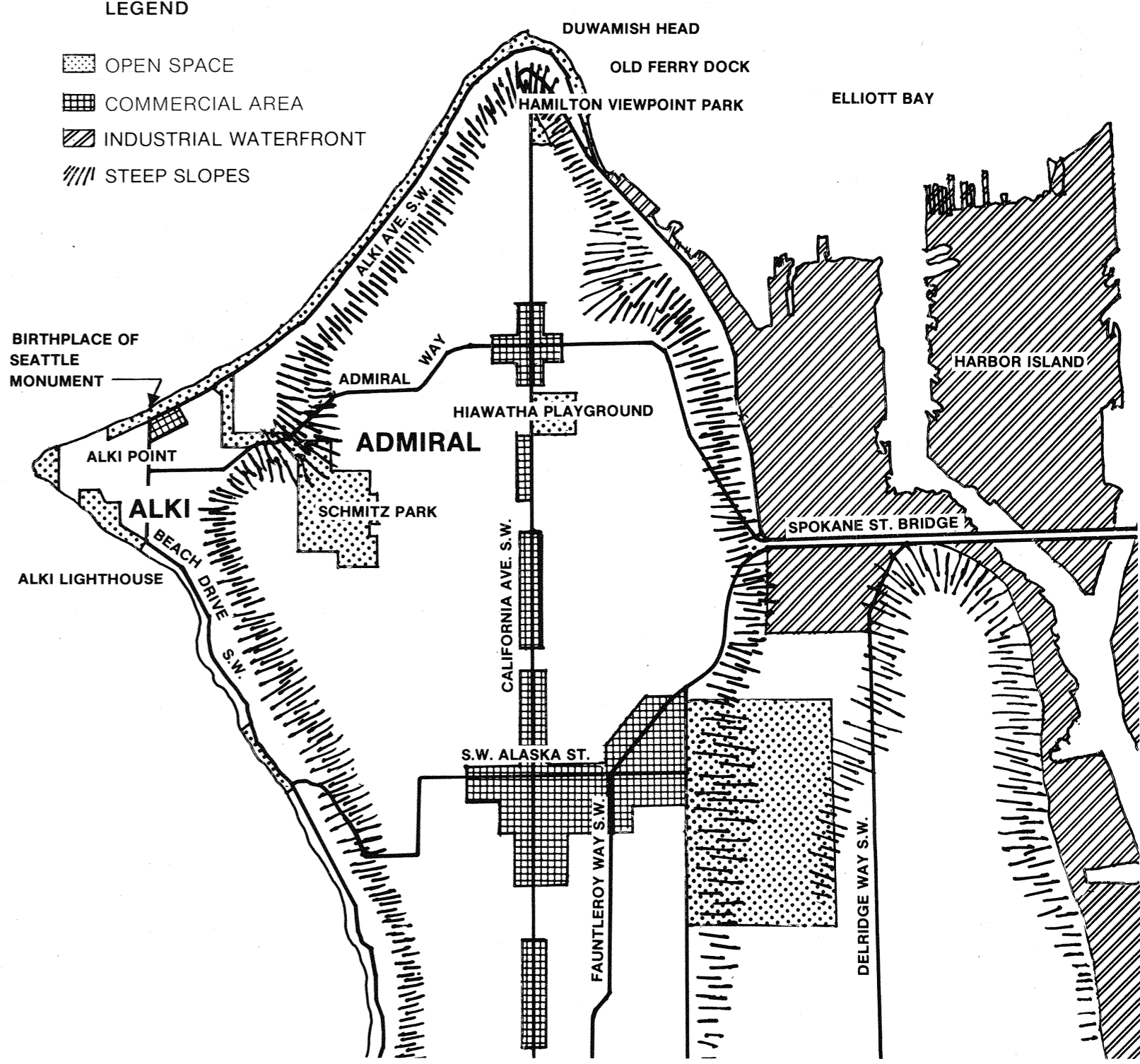
**L VACANT LOTS** Several publicly owned open spaces are scattered throughout the area holding potentials for future use as parks or playgrounds.

**M STREET END VIEW** Many street ends overlook splendid panoramas. Such outlooks could be improved into pleasant small neighborhood public viewpoints.

**N CALIFORNIA AVE S.W., "THE JUNCTION"** Groups of anonymous commercial buildings and colorful signs form an unassuming and vital business center with good streetscape qualities.

**O ALLEYS** Used especially by young children, the area's many alleys are pleasant pedestrian spaces where properly maintained.

SUMMARY MAP SHOWING VISUAL STRUCTURE



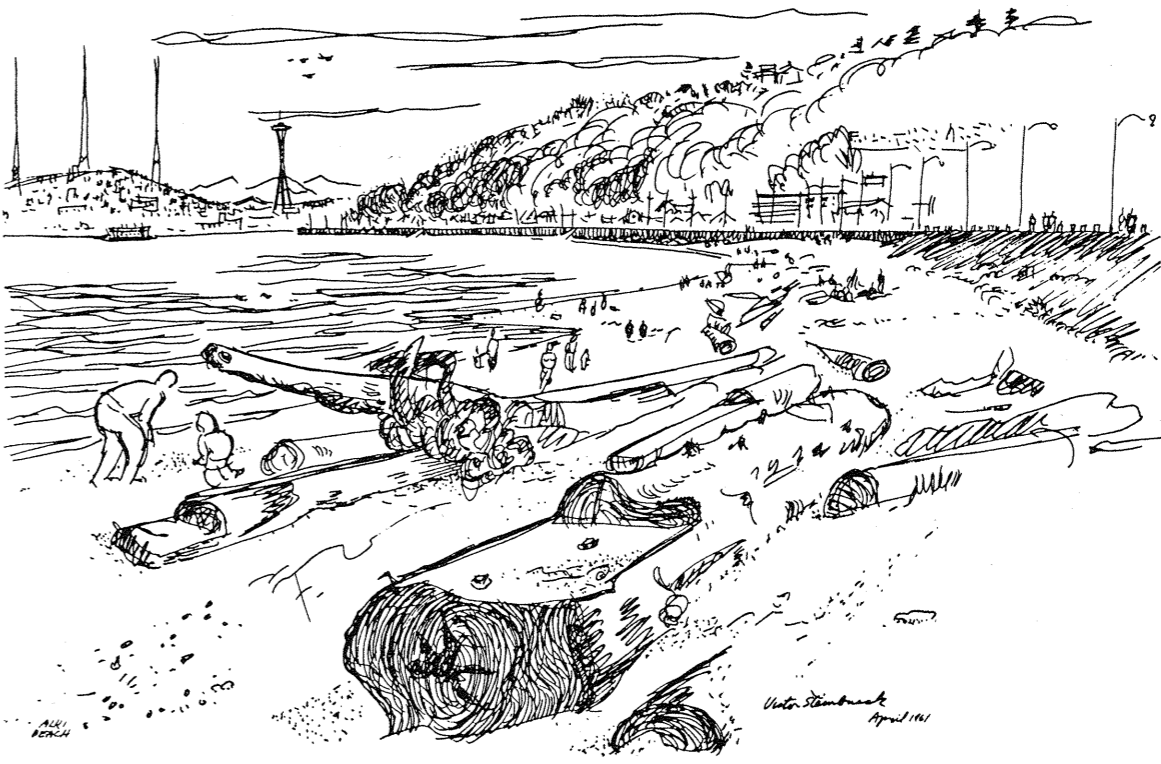
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

West Seattle is situated on a peninsula ridge directly across Elliott Bay from downtown Seattle. It is one of the city's most geographically isolated and identifiable communities even though it is dramatically visible from the Central Business District and commuting distances are not overly long. Whether it is a result of its unique topography or its special role in local history, West Seattle residents feel a special sense of community identity in that they live in the "town of West Seattle" which is yet within the city. Land use activities further support this "town within a city" sense, as West Seattle has its own thriving business area, parks, theatres, and community centers. The intervening Duwamish industrial basin further reinforces West Seattle's isolation by acting as an impenetrable barrier while providing jobs for the residents.

It is quite difficult, many of the steep ravines remain in their natural, forested condition. Earth movement can be observed by the condition of the foliage in some locations. The steep topography forms a natural green belt that is a valuable resource; not only for its recreational potential, but also because it offers visual relief from Admiral's strict grid-iron street layout and provides excellent vantage points for views of magnificent water and territorial panoramas to the North, East, and West. The Admiral community is fortunate in having a diverse and active commercial strip along California Avenue. Because it is centrally located, the business strip acts to unify the community. There are two major commercial centers — at the intersection of Admiral Way, and at the intersection of Alaska Street which is known as the "Junction." Lying between them is the Hiawatha recreation area which contains a community center, children's playgrounds, and athletic playfields. Located adjacent to the high school, this complex functions extremely well as a community focus and social center.

Whereas Admiral is separated from the waterfront by steep open slopes, Alki stretches along the northern and western beaches and thus is completely oriented to the water. Most Alki residences are only a few blocks from public waterfront, and often have fine views of Puget Sound. It is its relationship to the long waterfront that gives Alki its special identity and unique characteristics. Major streets and local commercial centers orient toward the water, and, for the most part, Alki's low-rise building development respects the area's natural amenities by not blocking panoramic views or intruding upon the beaches.

For this reason, protection of the shorelines from "intrusive development" is of utmost community importance. Large-scale development blocking views or pedestrian access would be detrimental to the community's environmental amenities. As land development pressures increase it becomes necessary to insure that new construction will benefit the locality as well as the entrepreneur.



HISTORY

Most local school children know that Alki Point is considered to be Seattle's birthplace by virtue of the fact that some of the city's founders landed there and erected a few log cabins before moving across Elliott Bay. However, few people realize that for centuries the point was an important site for Puget Sound Indians. There was no street end at Alki. "Me-Kwah-Mooks," Alki Point was known as "Smaqua-mox" and Duwamish Head was called "Skwux." The name of the Duwamish river as well as the Duwamish tribe itself is derived from the Indian word "Duwam-psh" meaning multi-colored river referring to the different colored silt delivered by the river's tributaries. The beach along Smaqua-mox was quite popular and was one of Chief Seattle's favorite places. Consequently, it was a coincidence that his tribe was on hand on November 13, 1851, to greet Seattle's early settlers arriving on the schooner *Exact*. It was a typically gloomy, rainy winter's day on the windswept beach, and according to early accounts not a very encouraging beginning to what was to become the Northwest's premier city. The pioneers called their new town New York, after the home state of Lee and Charlie Terry, but visitors soon started nicknaming the struggling settlement New York-Alki, meaning New York Bay and By in Chinook. The name Alki remained.

and so he picked up stakes and moved across the bay to Seattle. There was little consequent growth at Alki until 1888 when Puget Sound's first ferry line was established between Seattle and Duwamish Head. The ferry docks were near Street end. A rough beach road was constructed along the present route of Bonaire Drive connecting Alki with the ferry dock, and the ferry service made the Alki beaches quite popular for Sunday outings. Development of the high ground at the top of the West Seattle ridge was hampered by the steep slopes up from the Duwamish Head. There are stories of a local citizen named Mr. Barnescut who would hang a light at the front of his house to light the way of those returning on the evening ferry who then had to trudge up the footpath along Ferry Avenue. But soon thereafter a cable car line was built which operated on a loop route running up the hill along California Avenue to S.W. 48th Street and Admiral Way and then back down along Ferry Avenue to the docks. The cable car service promoted real estate sales along the ridge top and the Admiral community began to grow. Commercial development, including canneries and warehouses, sprang up at Duwamish Head. There was also a lumber mill near Pigeon Point.

School in 1912, local children took the ferry each day to attend Pacific School on First Hill. In 1916 the old Alki lighthouse was replaced with the present structure. Summer cottages continued to be built along Alki beaches. Many were given romantic or humorous names such as "The Clam," "The Rustic" or "Sunny June." Speculative house builders found the more level portions of the Admiral district ideal for middle-income residential development and the area grew rapidly during the first two decades of the century. The Depression virtually ended private development in the 1930's although there were some Federal projects such as the golf course, and highway improvements. Development in the 1950's and 1960's was concentrated primarily along the steep hillsides and ridges which provided less easily buildable sites but offered excellent views. The plans for the West Seattle bridge was the dominant physical planning issue during the late 1950's and early 1970's. West Seattle's residents are proud of their community's special identity and heritage. It is sometimes said that every other person in Alki is a local historian. Each year local high school students stage a re-enactment of the Alki landing, celebrating the birth of Seattle. But it is important to note that not only is Alki considered to be the city's birthplace, but also that it is the Seattle community with the longest continuous history.

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Thanks also to Ada Hallberg for her help and information in preparing this report.

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

**22 RESIDENCE, c. 1888.** One of Admiral's few remaining Victorian style houses. Removal of asbestos shingles would add to authenticity and attractiveness.

**28 BERNARD HOUSE, 1903 (Nelson).** "Alki Homestead Restaurant" built from logs which drifted to Alki Beach, the home is a prominent local landmark.

**13 KELLY HOUSE, 1904 (Mitchell).** An unusual shingle style house with classical details. Built by a plumber, Kelly, with plumbing in every room.

**23 WILSON HOUSE, 1908 (Lemeshko).** Architect: J. Wilson. An imaginative and sophisticated use of the eclectic Tudor style in an important architect for his own family home.

**25 RESIDENCE, 1910.** A nicely composed and landscaped house done in the California Mission style.

**8 RESIDENCE, 1911 (Rogers).** An example of the Prairie style characterized by horizontal massing, wide overhangs and a central chimney. The architect, A. Willsten, once worked for Frank Lloyd Wright.

**18 POTTER HOUSE, c. 1915 (Novak).** A straightforward but uniquely composed shingle style-craftsman style house.

**11 WEST SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1910.** Architects: Somervell and Cote. A pleasantly proportioned and detailed eclectic classic renaissance style building. Built with Carnegie Foundation funds.

**31 ALKI LIGHTHOUSE, 1916.** An important maritime landmark to the city as well as Alki, and a reminder of our connection to the sea.

**5 WEST SEATTLE HIGH SCHOOL, 1917.** An eclectic Romanesque style school featuring fine masonry work. The architect, E. Blair, was instrumental in developing steel frame school buildings.

**1 HOLY ROSARY CHURCH, 1937.** Architect: C. F. Mahon. An eclectic adaptation of the Italian Romanesque style which features a stained glass window and campanile.

**2 THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS, 1937.** Architect: S. G. Page. A very unique example of a Modern style church. Includes murals by Eileen Chabot.

**10 ADMIRAL TWIN THEATRE, c. 1955.** Architect: E. M. Pribica. An example of an Art Deco theatre building. The interior has been sympathetically remodeled.

**27 RESIDENCE, 1958 (Vanny).** The influence of Frank Lloyd Wright can be seen in this house's horizontal composition, siting, and use of clatories.

**15 LAMPHERE HOUSE, 1973.** Architect: Ralph Anderson. A dramatic example of a Northwest regional style house on a spectacular hillside site.

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

30. Bernard House (Fir Lodge) - "Alki Homestead", 1903, 2717 61st SW  
31. Bernert House, c. 1903, 6301 SW Stevens St. Originally the stable building for the Bernard Residence.  
32. Alki Lighthouse, 1916, Alki Point  
33. Maner House, 1904, 4004 SW Chibberg Ave SW. A fine craftsman cabin.

\*See captioned Photographs

LEGEND

- Significant to the city—warrant further evaluation for designation as historic landmark
- Significant to the community—special quality and character in relation to this neighborhood
- Building Group
- Landmark
- Street Furniture
- Civic Art
- Landscaping/Vegetation
- Open Space
- Street Trees
- Streetscape
- Roadway Element
- View
- Area Boundary
- Building Reference
- Urban Design Reference
- Common Building Type Reference

