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Since the information included is preliminary, corrections and additional information is solicited to provide refinement of the documents. Please send information to Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, 714 Smith Tower, Seattle 98104

Most importantly, the project was dependent upon the work of volunteers from the community whose cooperation and efforts were crucial to its success.

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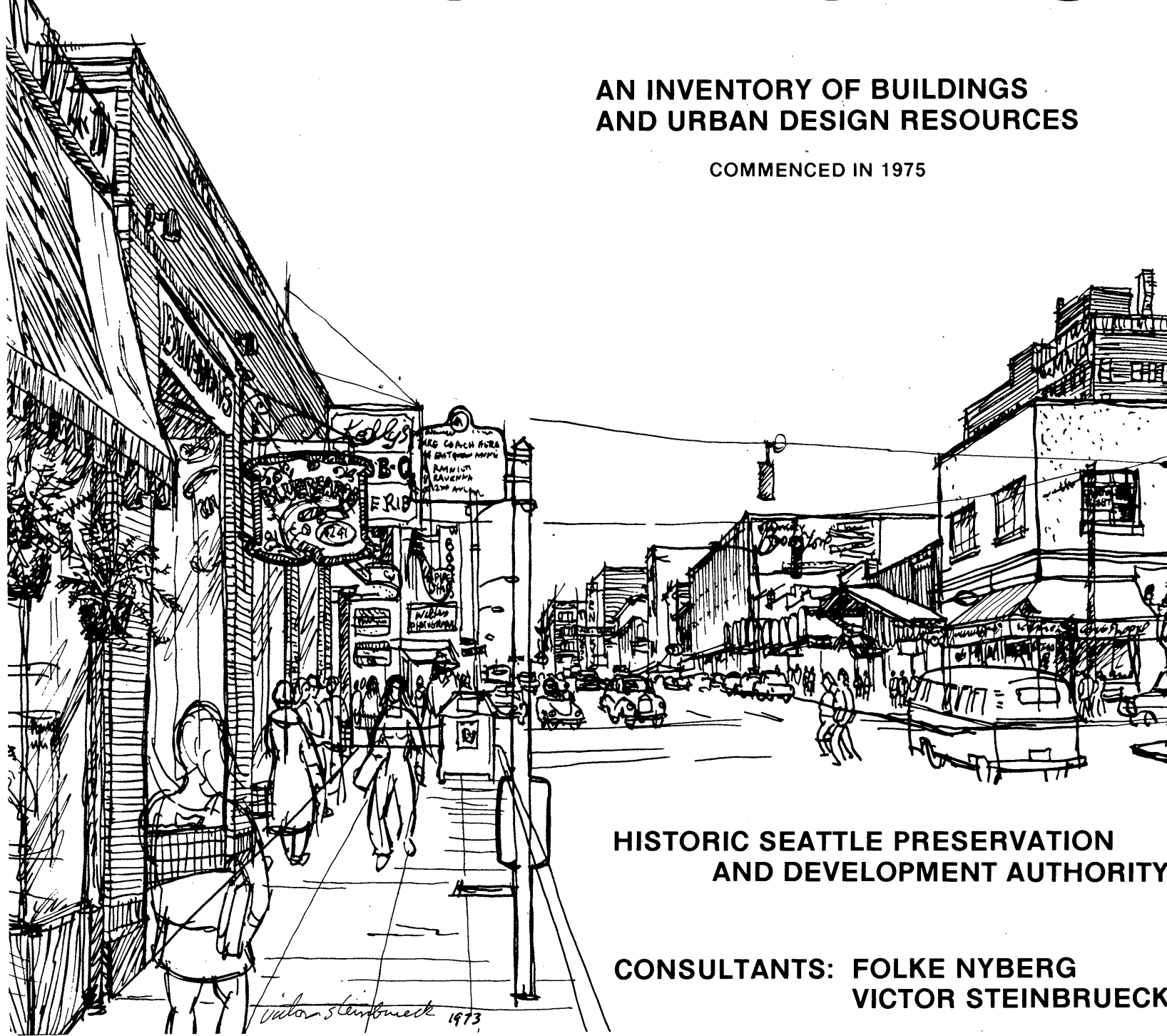
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# UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

## AN INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS AND URBAN DESIGN RESOURCES

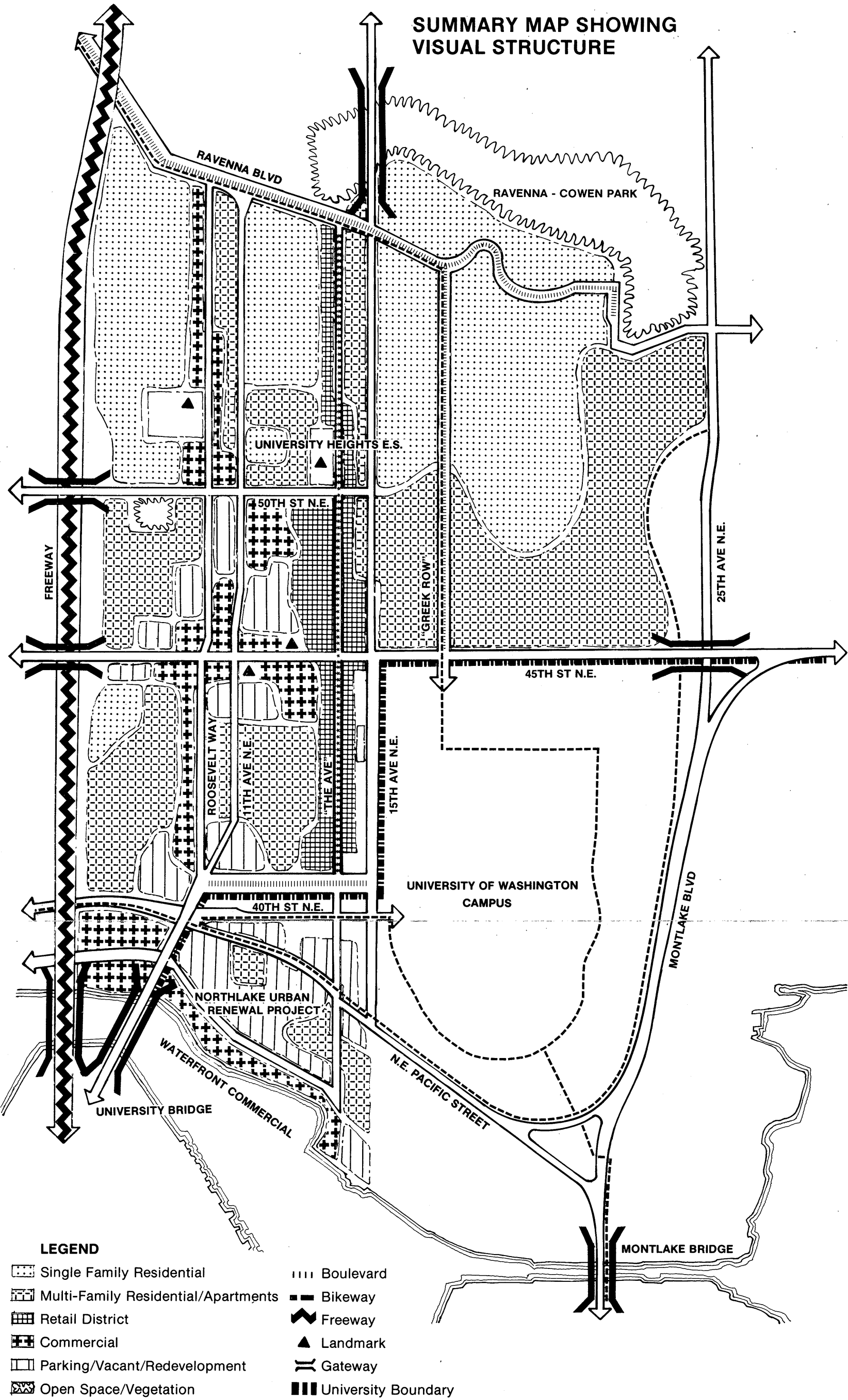
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HISTORIC SEATTLE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CONSULTANTS: FOLKE NYBERG  
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## SUMMARY MAP SHOWING VISUAL STRUCTURE



## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The University District is defined by distinct physical boundaries which heighten its visual identity: Portage Bay to the south, the Freeway to the west, Ravenna/Cowen Park to the north, and Montlake Boulevard, Union Bay and the University of Washington to the east. Visual and physical entrances are also well marked. Bridges such as the Montlake Bridge, University Bridge, the N.E. 45th and 50th Streets overpasses, the 15th Avenue N.E. bridge, the 20th Avenue N.E. pedestrian walkway and the N.E. 45th Street viaduct, serve as imageable gateways to the District.

Originally the residential and commercial communities in the District connected westward with the Latona, Wallingford and Greenwood communities. However, major physical barriers, changing neighborhood characteristics and excessive university expansion have reduced the size of the District, as it is known today. Although the University of Washington, as an institution, is an influential element in the District, the campus is not included in this inventory, in order to focus on the features of the University District community itself. The inventory of the campus will require a separate study.

There are two distinctive retail areas in the University District: an auto-oriented commercial strip along Roosevelt Way N.E. and a pedestrian-oriented strip along University Way N.E., also known as the "Ave". Historically, the University District retailers have served all of northeast Seattle. However, increasing traffic congestion, the Freeway, and the construction of Northgate and University Village shopping centers, have channeled the auto-oriented retail business elsewhere. Roosevelt Way N.E. continues to be auto-oriented, but caters more to local residents.

As is typical of a university community, the University District is home to "Greek Row" immediately north of the University of Washington. The fraternity and sorority houses are an eclectic mixture of styles, primarily older, brick-faced structures closely set on tree-lined streets.

With the exception of Greek Row and the retail areas, most of the District north of N.E. 45th Street is composed of single-family homes. Many of these homes have been converted to apartments, boarding or rooming houses, or are occupied by cooperative living groups. The residential areas west of 15th Avenue N.E. and south of 45th Avenue N.E. are experiencing the pressure of commercial expansion and give evidence of deterioration due to neglect by absentee landlords and a mobile population of residents. However, the houses in the residential areas to the north, although also occupied by a mixture of single-family and multi-family residents, are in good to excellent condition, forming a healthy and pleasant neighborhood. The area east of 15th between Ravenna Park and Greek Row is particularly rich in amenities such as tree-lined streets and boulevards, and entrances to the Park.

Apartments are located along the major north-south arterials, but the major concentration is found south of N.E. 45th Street between Roosevelt and 15th Avenues N.E. Many of the newer apartments were the result of a building boom in the early 1960's. These apartments typically are of the simplest

construction, with motel-type, exterior entrance and corridor designs all too frequent. Because of the poor quality of many of these structures, relatively rapid deterioration can be expected and early redevelopment will be needed. Most of the other large apartments are solid, brick exterior 3-5 story structures built in the 1920's and '30's.

Although the University District has a relatively low profile, there are two recent additions to the skyline, the Safeco Tower and a condominium tower. Despite these physical constraints, significant landmark, the University Tower Hotel, previously known as the Edmond Meany Hotel.

The University District was laid out in typical grid fashion. The blocks, however, are especially long in the north-south direction, and the individual lots are generally quite small. The long blocks tend to increase traffic circulation problems and make pedestrian travel (the most popular means of in-District travel) tedious and often unnecessarily lengthy. The small lots have made it very difficult to assemble enough land for economic redevelopment in multi-family zones. The narrowness of many of the District's streets was appropriate to its early development but now increases the difficulty of adapting the District to high-density traffic and heavy use during peak hours. Despite these physical constraints, Roosevelt Way N.E. and 11th Avenue N.E. receive considerable north-south arterial traffic. East-west traffic cuts across the District on N.E. 45th and N.E. 50th Streets. This through traffic combines with heavy peak-hour traffic to intensify the District's circulation problem. As many as 70,000 people commute to the District daily to the University of Washington and several other large employers in the area. The District is well served, however, by Metro buses and special University-Trans buses which circulate to the District from outside areas which have high concentrations of students, faculty and staff.

Several factors have changed the character of the District from the predominantly single-family residential community and nearly self-sufficient "city-within-a-city" of its early days. It is now surrounded by competitive shopping centers. The Freeway increases access to other commercial competition and cuts the community off from the residential resources (schools, parks, etc.) of its traditional neighbors Latona, Wallingford and Greenwood. The University, on its west by Union Bay, looks to the neighborhood on its west to meet the needs of its expanding physical plant and student enrollment. These demands reduce the residential housing stock and increase the transience of the community's residents. The Northlake Urban Renewal Project, a proliferation of parking lots south of 40th Street, is evidence of the new demands of traffic, university expansion, and land-use development now being made on the District's resources. New commercial institutions locating in the area, and zoning for high-rise development place the single-family residents in competition with land speculators and commercial developers, as well as students, for the District's space and resources. A recent proposal by members of the University District community to downzone parts of the District for low-rise apartments and single-family homes has focused attention on this conflict of uses and the need for a compromise among the competing elements now operating in the area.

## HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

Prior to 1885, the area which later became the University District was very sparsely settled, primarily by Indians, and the major interest in this location was in its logging potential. By 1887, the Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad was completed along the same route as the now-abandoned Burlington-Northern Railroad line. This marked the beginning of increased non-Indian settlement with the Indians leaving by 1903. Among other things, the railroad carried caskets to Calvary Cemetery located on a hill just north of the present University Village shopping center.

Early development in the District was slow mainly because it was considered to be quite far out from Seattle. To get there from Seattle, it was necessary to take a horse car to south Lake Union, and then a boat across the Lake, ending with a horse-drawn conveyance or a muddy trudge up the hill. The Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad was an alternative mode of travel, but lengthy and unpopular. The District's isolation contributed to the development of a self-sufficient community, containing all the necessary stores and activities. This city-within-a-city characteristic of the District is stronger than ever today. In 1890, David T. Denny and the Eastern Associates (who later became the Third Street Suburban Railway Company) built the first electric trolley line. It went over the old Latona Bridge, which was west of the present University Bridge, near where the present Freeway bridge is located. The Latona Bridge was renovated several times before it was replaced by the University Bridge in 1909.

In 1893, the University of Washington received a gift of land located just north of Seattle and between Union and Portage Bays. In 1895, the University moved from its downtown location to the new campus site. From then on, the District's development was mainly related to the development of the University. With improved access and the relocation of the University, development increased. The focus of the progress was along Brooklyn Avenue N.E. and University Way N.E. (then 14th Avenue). From 1890 to 1920, University District was primarily composed of working class families. Locally owned small truck farms and small industries provided employment. In the 1910's, an increasing orientation to the University-related population was notable. In 1902, the first seven houses in Greek Row were founded with others soon following. In 1906, the District's first bank (University National Bank, now Pacific National Bank) was located at 42nd Street and 14th Avenue, which was then the main entrance to the University Campus. The Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition was held in 1909 on the campus, and it greatly boosted development in the surrounding community. The College Inn (at N.E. 40th and University Way N.E.) which has been restored and is in the State Landmark Registry, was built to house Exposition visitors. A second trolley line, the Wallingford Car Line, was added by 1910, running north through Wallingford and east to 42nd Street (now the University (University Way). This encouraged development north of 45th Street and by 1910 the district was entirely platted.

The occurrence of the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition along with the linking of the two lakes, and the development of the University of Washington, combined with improved access, made the University District very attractive as a residential area. A building boom in the 1920's resulted in much of the remaining undeveloped land being filled in with single-family homes, and the business district prospering. At this time the center of the District business community shifted north, with the bank moving to its present location at N.E. 45th Street and University Way N.E. During this time the Commodore, Wilsonian, Mallory and Duchess apartment houses were built, as were the YMCA at 15th Avenue N.E. and N.E. 42nd Street (now the University's Eagleson Hall, School of Social Work), the public library at 9th Avenue N.E. and N.E. 50th Street, many of the churches, the Egyptian Theater (where Pay 'n Save now is), J.C. Penney's (now the Ave Arcade Building), Edmund Meany Hotel (1931) and others.

The dedication of parks and boulevards also figured significantly in the District's growth. Ravenna Park was originally developed by W.W. Beck in 1889. Beck named his park "Ravenna" after the Italian city of that name, famous for its tall pine trees. The City purchased the property in 1911 as part of its park system. Cowen Park, immediately west of Ravenna Park, was given to the City by another realtor, Charles Cowen, in 1909.

A strong sense of community developed, and many community business and social organizations were founded at this time. The first of many signs of the District's adaptability and sense of survival occurred when, in an effort to save the Meany Hotel, stock was sold and bought by University District members, who felt the Hotel was important to the growing community. The effort was successful and although the hotel has changed ownership and names (now the University Tower Hotel), it remains an important element of the business district.

Although the University District felt the effects of the Great Depression, the rate of development decreased only temporarily. In 1939, the 45th Street Viaduct was completed,

## COMMON BUILDING TYPES

Because the University District features a wide variety of residents and specialized activities, there is also a wide variety of building types to house them. Two of the most characteristic commercial types are the storefront and the auto showroom. Commercial storefronts line the University "Ave", portions of Brooklyn Avenue N.E., and the cross streets from N.E. 45th Street to N.E. 42nd Street. These low or medium rise buildings housing small shops, restaurants, offices and studios, often with apartments above, are very important to the University District as they allow a desirable intermixing of activities while establishing a pedestrian scale and rhythmic continuity to the business center. On the other hand, the auto showrooms, generally concentrated along N.E. 45th Street, Brooklyn Avenue N.E. and Roosevelt Avenue N.E., produce quite a different visual character with their broad, low profiles, diverse styling, bold signs, and surrounding parking lots.

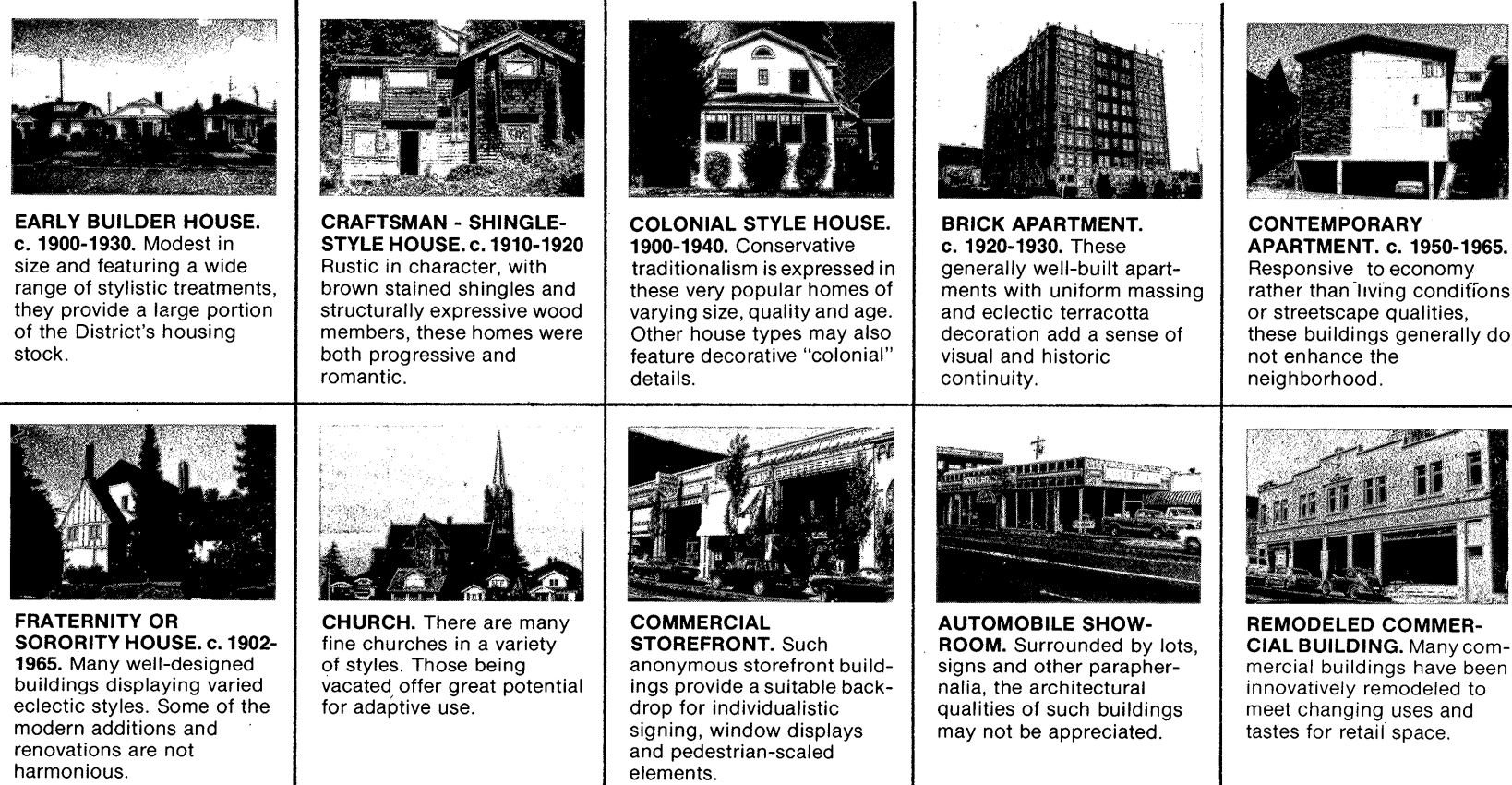
There are many different residential building types also. North of N.E. 50th Street and west of 15th Avenue N.E. the houses are generally modest in size and date from the first three decades of this century. West of 15th Avenue N.E. the house types are generally larger and more diverse in stylistic treatment with Craftsman, Colonial, and Builder's Tudor being the most common styles. There are several large brick

apartments in the District which are important because they provide necessary housing and because their restrained brick facades lend an air of permanence in an area that has undergone constant change.

The fraternity or sorority house represents a residential building type unique to the University District within this city. As many of these buildings were designed by prominent architects, they are some of the most interesting buildings in the area. Located in a group at the north of the University, along finely landscaped streets, the fraternity and sorority houses constitute a most important physical resource.

Although University of Washington buildings are not included in the inventory, there are other institutional buildings which are important to the community. Most notable are the numerous churches which are scattered throughout the area; many of which are also visual, architectural or historical landmarks.

It is important to note that building types play an especially important role in defining the district's character because each type tends to be concentrated into identifiable areas. Thus, the buildings visually reinforce and complement each other, acting to establish a recognizable scale, spatial quality, and ambience.



N.E. 45TH ST. ELEVATION

18th Ave NE

19th Ave NE

20th Ave NE

21st Ave NE

22nd Ave NE