



## PRESERVATION NEWS

### PRESERVATION IS A PUBLIC BENEFIT:

#### *Defending the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance*

**It's not often that one building's fate—an already landmarked one at that—can have monumental implications on preservation in Seattle.**

Such was the case of the Seattle-First National Bank Building (SFNB), located at 566 Denny Way in Uptown, which was designated a landmark under four of the six designation standards in 2006.

Walgreens purchased the SFNB a year after its designation. They worked with the Landmarks Preservation Board to reach a controls and incentives (C&I) agreement in 2021 that would apply to the site and exterior of the building. (Controls help protect a landmark and economic incentives can help an owner maintain it.)

The final step is City Council approval of the designating ordinance and adoption of C&Is. These are all routine and important parts of the landmarking process.

In early December 2022, members of the City Council's Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights, and Culture Committee questioned why the building was landmarked at all, wondered what public benefit it offered, and wanted to dictate use of this privately-owned property, believing that it was getting in the way of more housing in densely populated Uptown.

The Council Committee recommended to the full City Council that they reject the designating ordinance and C&Is.

**We saw this recommendation as a threat to preservation in Seattle. It would leave the landmarked SFNB vulnerable to demolition *and* set a bad precedent that could undermine the landmark designation process for any landmark that does not currently have controls and possibly any future landmarks.**

Historic Seattle and many organizations and individuals across Seattle jumped into action to rally around the SFNB and defend the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO).

A key message was that preservation and housing are not mutually exclusive. It's both/and, not either/or.

For example, the landmark owner can transfer development rights to a developer who owns a qualifying property in Uptown, paving the way for additional housing units. We also supported a compromise that would place no controls on the parking lot north of the building, making it easier for development.

In the end, the Council voted 9-0 at the January 10, 2023 meeting for an amendment to the original designating ordinance that would place controls only on the building's exterior and the portion of the site between the building and adjacent streets.

**This unanimous decision by the Council confirms the longstanding landmark designation process and reaffirms that historic preservation is a public benefit.**

This was truly a WIN for preservation in Seattle. Visit [historicseattle.org/blog](https://historicseattle.org/blog) for more information.

The fight is not over. The LPO, while strong, is not ironclad. There have been instances where a landmark was torn down due to lack of controls. We still await C&Is for The Showbox and nearby Hahn Building across from Pike Place Market. Despite evidence otherwise, owners are citing lack of "reasonable economic use" for the properties.

We at Historic Seattle are vigilantly monitoring these landmarks and others.

*Image: Without community support, the Seattle-First National Bank Building's fate could have set a dangerous precedent for preservation in Seattle.*

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Join us in the fight to protect places that matter. They can't protect themselves.

- Donate online at [historicseattle.org/give](https://historicseattle.org/give)
- Return the enclosed envelope
- #GiveBIG on May 2 & 3



# WE JUST GOT A WONDERFUL 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY PRESENT!

Historic Seattle was recently awarded a Preservation Award from the prestigious Victorian Society in America (VSA).

*“The Society celebrates Historic Seattle’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of life and service and its prospects for future accomplishments. We have known and admired Historic Seattle’s accomplishments and the almost unique organizational ability to fulfill your self-described aspiration to Educate, Advocate, and Preserve. You, your talented staff, and your many volunteers have done that admirably.”*

The VSA was founded in 1966 after the 1964 destruction of New York’s magnificent Pennsylvania Station. The goal? To ensure that other important structures did not meet a similar fate. Historic Seattle was born of a similar sentiment.

From our first project, the 1903 Main Street School Annex on 6th Ave S., to the most recent, the 1889 Good Arts Building in Pioneer Square, Historic Seattle has lived up to its original purpose as stated in the November 20, 1973 City of Seattle charter that brought us to life: “to be a legal entity through which citizens may fully participate...in the preservation and enhancement of the historic heritage of the City of Seattle for the mutual pride and enjoyment of all citizens.”

Enormous thanks go out to Larry Kreisman, preservation superhero and former Historic Seattle Program Director, for the nomination in recognition of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**Preservation is a team effort. We’re grateful to all who have been with us over the past 50 years, those that are with us today, and those that will join us in the future.**

We will celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this fall. More to come!

## ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

A year ago, we announced our partnership with the Black Heritage Society of Washington State (BHS).

Why? As it stands today, out of hundreds of designated Seattle landmarks, *only about 2%* have significant ties to Black history.

The aim? To ensure the preservation of places that reflect Seattle’s full story. To elevate a more equitable standard in preservation and stewardship.

How? By increasing the number of landmarks in Seattle and King County representing and celebrating Black history, contributions, and culture.

**Thanks to generous donors like you, and in partnership with BHS, we are launching a series of hands-on, skill-building workshops with a cohort of enthusiastic participants that will focus on landmark nominations.**

More voices for preservation = a win for all!

*“Black Heritage Society of Washington State’s partnership with Historic Seattle combines our like commitment of preserving local history. The legacy of African Americans is well-rooted in Seattle. We should and can recognize this history through the designation of sites that tell the full story of our rich and shared history.”*

— Stephanie Johnson-Toliver,  
President of BHS



## CALL FOR PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATIONS

Each year Historic Seattle honors outstanding people and projects in preservation and we need your nominations!

**Categories:** Best Preservation Project, Preservation Champion, Community Investment, Preserving Neighborhood Character, Community Advocacy (includes a \$3,000 prize), and Outstanding Stewardship.

**The deadline for nominations is May 12.** Visit [historicseattle.org/awards](https://historicseattle.org/awards) for information about categories and nomination rules.

We’ll celebrate the winners at our annual benefit, the Preservation Celebration, on September 28 at Washington Hall. Stay tuned for more details.

*Image: The Queen Anne Exchange received our Best Preservation Project award in 2022.*

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**April 29: The Soul Pole in partnership with the Seattle Public Library**

In person | Free

Our final Preservation Award Winner Series program highlighting this special artwork honoring 400 years of African American history. (View past digital programs on our YouTube channel.)

**May 9: Preserving Los Angeles: How Historic Places Can Transform America’s Cities**

Online | Free

Ken Bernstein, preservation champion, will highlight Los Angeles as a model for how preservation can revitalize neighborhoods and build community. In conversation with City of Seattle Preservation Officer Sarah Sotd and Historic Seattle staff.

**May—August: Good Days at Good Arts**

In person | Free | *Details to come*

A series of programs and events celebrating artists and creatives in partnership with the businesses at the Good Arts Building.

*More programming information at [historicseattle.org/events](https://historicseattle.org/events)*