

# LANDMARK & HISTORIC SITE INFORMATION

*Technical Paper No. 1*

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**King County**

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## **Introduction**

To individuals who are new to the field of historic preservation, the technical terminology relating to landmarks and historic sites can be confusing. This paper describes the different landmarks registers as well as historic resource inventories. It also provides some basic contact information for the government agencies involved in historic preservation activities. Information relating to landmarks and historic resources are public records that often contain primary and secondary source material of value for historical research.

## **HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORIES**

### **What is a Survey and Inventory?**

Government agencies at all levels conduct historic resource "surveys", which involve research and the creation of a written form, file or electronic record documenting each historic building or resource. The result is a Historic Resource Inventory, which may take the form of an electronic data base, archival paper and film files, or publications. Sites, buildings and properties that appear on an "inventory" are not automatically landmarked. In fact, many inventoried properties may not be eligible for landmark status because they do not meet the criteria for designation that a specific landmark register may require. Inventories do, however, help to document local history and to provide the contextual background for selecting the smaller number of properties that may be landmarked. It is important to realize that not every older property or building which is casually or popularly called an "historic site" or one which may have a plaque affixed to it is a formally designated landmark. Property owners or interested groups may place markers and plaques on sites and buildings on an informal basis.

Information about historic buildings, along with information on other types of cultural resources, often appears in government planning documents, including community plans and the comprehensive plans of municipalities. Historic Resource Inventories are often "archival" resources, containing primary source material of historical research value. Resources frequently included in inventory files are: copies of contemporary and historic photos; interview notes; manuscript material; copies of contemporary and historical records and documents; and oral history transcriptions.

### **The King County Historic Resources Inventory**

Since 1977, the King County Historic Preservation Program has conducted a multi-phased, ongoing survey of historic resources. The resulting inventory currently includes forms and files for over 3500 properties. The Program is also in the process of conducting inventories in cities and towns that have signed interlocal agreements with the County for historic preservation services. Each property has been researched and photographed; making the inventory forms and files a valuable historical record for researchers. The inventories are searchable manually or on electronic databases. An illustrated booklet, *King County Survey of Historic Places: A Guide to*

***Historic Sites in King County***, was published in 1979 and provides interesting background on King County resources. Although out of print, it is available at most public libraries in the area.

### **Other Historic Resource Inventories**

Federal agencies including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service, the State, and a number of Municipalities have developed and maintain their own Historic Resource Inventories. Auburn, Bellevue, Bothell, Burien, Kent, Kirkland, Normandy Park, Redmond, SeaTac, Seattle and Tukwila are among the municipalities that have compiled inventories. Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority has published a series of 16 "Urban Resource Inventory" maps which provide an introduction to neighborhood resources and building types in the City of Seattle. Altogether, estimates are that in excess of 5,000 properties have been inventoried around King County.

### **Washington State Archaeological Site Inventory**

The Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) maintain records of significant historic and prehistoric sites that have been listed on the Washington State Archaeological Site Inventory. The individual records are known as "site forms." Archaeological sites are assigned standard numbers. Site forms, as well as most other site-specific information about archaeological properties, are exempt from public disclosure under State law to prevent vandalism and looting. Information about discoveries of new sites may be reported to the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation at the address given below. The DAHP is one of several collaborating agencies that produce the ***Field Guide to Washington Archaeology***.

Not all of the properties listed on the archaeological site inventory have been landmarked. In some cases they have been "determined eligible" for the National Register of Historic Places. Others may be listed on the National, State, or King County Landmark Registers. King County has developed a formal procedure for designation of eligible archaeological sites to its landmarks register.

### **HABS/HAER**

The Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Program was established in 1933 to document buildings that are of historic and architectural significance, many of which are threatened with demolition or alteration. The program is a cooperative activity of the National Park Service, the Library of Congress, and the American Institute of Architects. To date, over 13,000 buildings around the country have been recorded, a number of which have been demolished. Types of documents collected in the survey include: architectural drawings, professional photographs; maps, architectural photogrammetry; and other materials.

The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is an inventory and documentation of properties that illustrate significant aspects of our industrial and engineering heritage. The HAER Program is a joint inventory and archival documentation project of the National Park Service, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Library of Congress. A number of guides and catalogs exist for HABS/HAER properties. For information, contact The Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 20540, or the U.S. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 20240. HABS/HAER information is available on-line at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/habshaer>.

## **LANDMARK REGISTERS**

### **What is a Landmark?**

People often refer to familiar buildings in their community as "landmarks", and sometimes important legal actions are referred to as "landmark" decisions. For the purposes of this paper, the term "landmark" has a more specific meaning. It is a physical property that has been formally designated and listed on a register of historic places by an agency of government. The landmarking process is defined by the laws, policies and procedures adopted by a particular governmental agency. A landmark can be a building, a structure, a site (including an archaeological site), a district with a number of buildings, or an object, such as a ship or a railway locomotive. Landmarking may involve extensive research, a formal nomination and public input process and a formal designation process that measures the information known about a property against an objective and formally adopted set of criteria. Not every property that is nominated to a landmark register meets the "tests" included in the designation criteria.

### **A Number of Landmark Registers**

One of the more important things to know about officially designated landmarks is that a number of levels of government are active in the process of designating landmark properties, including:

- the federal government
- state government
- counties
- municipalities

Landmark designation procedures at all levels of government are formal, public processes, established by law (statute, code or ordinance) by the appropriate legislative authority. Most all of the states have landmark programs, but relatively few counties and cities in Washington have adopted them. Lists of landmarks designated by government agencies are often referred to as "landmark registers," "heritage registers," or "registers of historic places." Landmark designations by governmental agencies may involve different:

- designation criteria
- incentive programs for property owners (such as grants and tax benefit opportunities)
- land use controls
- design and/or environmental review requirements

Listing on a state or national register may not necessarily be more important and helpful to an historic preservation proponent or a property owner than a county or municipal landmark designation.

Each level of designation or register may offer different incentives. Designation criteria and land use controls or "protections" offered may vary widely from one register to another. The minimum age requirement for properties listed on the National Register is normally 50 years; that for King County Register is 40; and Seattle's is 25. Some designations, such as those of Seattle and King County, do not require owner consent; other landmark ordinances, such as the City of Bothell's, do require it.

Landmark files, like those of historic resource inventories, often contain primary and secondary source materials of considerable historical research potential. Some of the information included

may be found nowhere else in the public domain. Landmark nomination forms are often succinct statements of a property's historical and architectural significance, but they also sometimes contain valuable contextual information about communities and resource types. Landmark nomination files typically contain much more information than historic resource inventory files. This is because the landmarking process is more formalized and requires more thorough and extensive documentation.

### **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places (or National Register) is an official listing of districts, sites, buildings, structures, landscapes and objects significant in American History, architecture, archaeology, and culture. The National Register Program is administered at the federal level by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, in conjunction with the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Nominations to the National Register for properties that are located in Washington State are reviewed by the Washington State Advisory Council, a governor-appointed citizen board, which is staffed by state employees of the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). If nominations receive a positive recommendation, they are forwarded to the National Advisory Council for final approval and listing by the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. In Seattle and King County, there are several hundred properties listed on the National Register, including a number of historic districts. Questions relating to National Register properties in Washington State should be referred to the DAHP at P.O. Box 48343, Olympia, WA 98504-8343, 360-586-3065, or internet at <http://www.dahp.wa.gov>. The DAHP maintains a searchable list of National and Washington Heritage Register Properties on its web site. Information about the National Register Program at the federal level can be accessed at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/places.htm>.

### **National Historic Landmark Register**

The National Historic Landmark Register is the most prestigious register in the country. Designated by the Secretary of the Interior of the U.S. Department of the Interior, less than 2,500 historic places are designated in the National Historic Landmark Register, including seven properties in King County. They include five vessels and two shoreside properties: the Georgetown Steam Plant; Pioneer Square and Pergola; the Lightship Swiftsure (formerly: Relief); the Tugboat Arthur Foss; the Steamboat Virginia V; the Schooner Adventuress; and the Fireboat Duwamish. The process for nominating properties to this level of landmark designation is similar to those for the National Register described above. For information, contact the DAHP, which maintains a list of these properties.

### **Other Federal Designations**

In addition to the landmark registers listed above, either the National Park Service or the U.S. Congress may designate a variety of other types of cultural properties, including: national preserves; national historic areas; national historic battlefields; national monuments; national historic sites; national historic trails; national historic parks; national heritage corridors and other types of property designations. Overall, there are few of these in the state and around King County. Many of these properties are administered by the National Park Service, which can provide information on specific property types. For information, contact the National Park Service Seattle Support Office in Seattle at 909 First Avenue, Seattle WA 98104-1060, 206-220-4000.

### **Washington Heritage Register**

The listing of a property on the Washington Heritage Register is intended to give recognition to and encourage protection of places having historic significance in the State of Washington. It is an honorary designation, although some properties listed on the Register may come under state environmental review laws or qualify for limited incentives. In King County there are about 75 properties listed on the Washington Heritage Register. It is administered by the DAHP under Chapters of the Revised Code of Washington. For further information or a list of these properties, contact the DAHP at the above address or web site.

### **Washington Heritage Barn Register**

Much like the Washington Heritage Register, listing a barn on the Washington Heritage Barn Register is intended to give recognition to and encourage protection of places having historic significance. It is an honorary designation, and offers no protection from demolition, nor requires review of alterations. However, there is a competitive grant program available through the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. In King County there are about 25 barns listed on the Washington Heritage Barn Register. For further information or a list of these properties, contact the DAHP at the above address or web site.

### **King County Register of Historic Places**

King County Landmarks are designated by the King County Landmarks Commission, a nine-member citizen board appointed by the County Executive under Chapter 20.62 of the King County Code. Designated King County Landmark properties may be eligible for certain incentives and are protected by certain design review processes. At present there are more than 200 properties listed in the combined King County and Interlocal City Landmarks Register. Staff support for the Commission is provided by the King County Historic Preservation Program, part of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks. The Commission designates King County Landmarks only in unincorporated areas of the County. For information, contact the Program at 201 S. Jackson, Suite 700, Seattle, WA 98104, 206-477-4528, or at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/landmarks>. A complete list of all properties designated by the Commission, including those in Cities with which King County has an interlocal agreement for historic preservation services, is available from the Preservation Program as Technical Paper No. 6, *King County and City Landmarks List*.

### **Interlocal Cities Municipal Landmarks Registers**

The King County Landmarks Commission acts as a municipal landmarks commission in those cities and towns that have entered into an interlocal agreement with King County for historic preservation services. The Commission currently designates landmarks in: Auburn, Black Diamond, Burien, Carnation, Covington, Des Moines, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Issaquah, Kenmore, Kent, Kirkland, Maple Valley, Newcastle, North Bend, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, Shoreline, Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Tukwila, and Woodinville. For information on municipally designated landmarks in these communities, contact the KCHPP at the above address.

### **Community Landmark Register (Unincorporated King County)**

The King County Landmarks Commission also designates "Community Landmarks" which are locally significant properties. Community Landmarks do not have to meet the more stringent criteria of properties listed on the King County Landmarks Register, and are largely an honorary

designation. For information, contact the King County Historic Preservation Program at the above address.

### **Seattle Landmark Register**

City of Seattle Landmarks are designated by the Seattle Landmark Preservation Board, a nine-member citizen board appointed by the Mayor. Staff support for the Board and a number of District Review Boards, which review actions affecting landmarks in the City's historic districts, is provided by the Seattle Historic Preservation Program (SHPP) within the Department of Neighborhoods. To date, the Board has designated over 200 individual landmarks and six historic districts, including: Pioneer Square; Pike Place Market; Chinatown-International District; Ballard Avenue; Columbia City; Ft. Lawton, and Harvard-Belmont. For information, contact the SHPP at 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1700, Seattle, WA 98104, 206-684-0464, or internet at <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/> (Select Historic Preservation). A list of Seattle landmark properties is available on the web site.

### **Other Municipal Landmark Registers**

The City of Bothell Landmark Preservation Board was established under City Ordinance. For information contact The City's Department of Community Development, 9654 NE 182<sup>nd</sup> Street, Bothell, WA 98011, 425-486-3256, or internet at <http://www.ci.bothell.wa.us> (Select About Bothell/History/Historic Preservation). A program description as well as a table of designated landmark properties in the city is available on the site.

### **Other "Landmark" Designations**

Both the American Society of Civil Engineers and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers designate "landmarks." While the process for nominating the properties is a formal one, the few designations that have been made around King County are largely honorary. These designations can help to heighten public visibility and recognition of a building or a site, but they do not directly affect public policy or land use. Some of the nominations for these properties may contain useful technical information. In certain instances, these properties may also have been formally designated to landmark registers by government agencies. Historical societies, hereditary organizations and other groups have been known to affix markers, monuments and plaques to sites and buildings, but these activities are also honorary and do not involve "official" landmarking procedures.