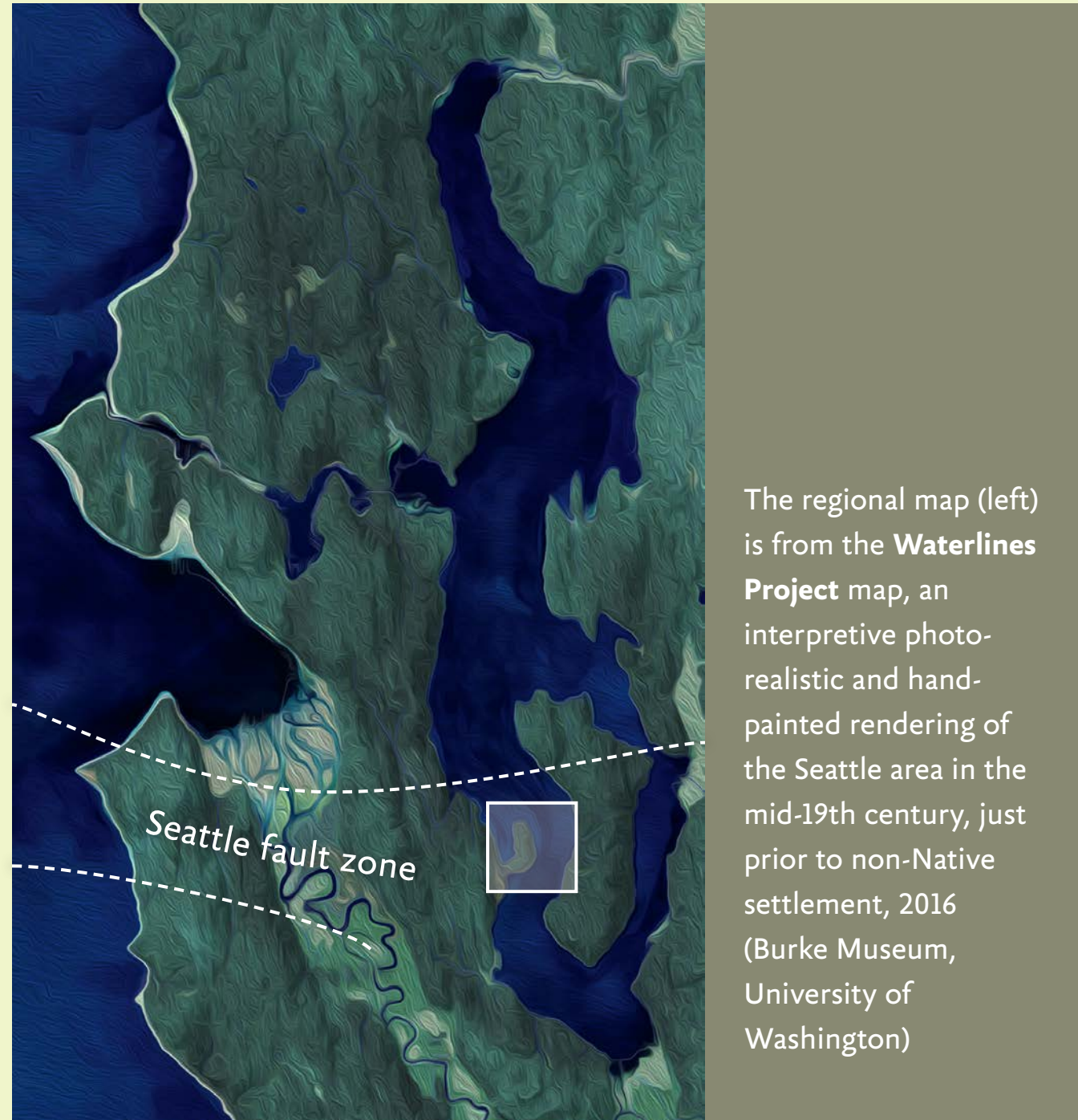


## Ancient Earthquakes

Seattle is covered in so much silty sand and gravel left by glaciers that it's rare to see bedrock. Here at Seward Park, earthquakes have raised the land, exposing bedrock to create an "earthquake scarp." The bedrock on display along Seward Park's scarp trail is part of the 30-million-year-old Blakeley Formation.



## The Seattle Fault

About 1,100 years ago, the region was shaken by a massive earthquake along what we call the Seattle Fault. During the quake, land on the north side of the fault dropped 3 to 6 feet, while land on the south rose as much as 20 feet. Huge landslides caused by the earthquake carried hundreds of old-growth fir and cedar trees to the bottom of Lake Washington, where they still stand upright beneath the water.

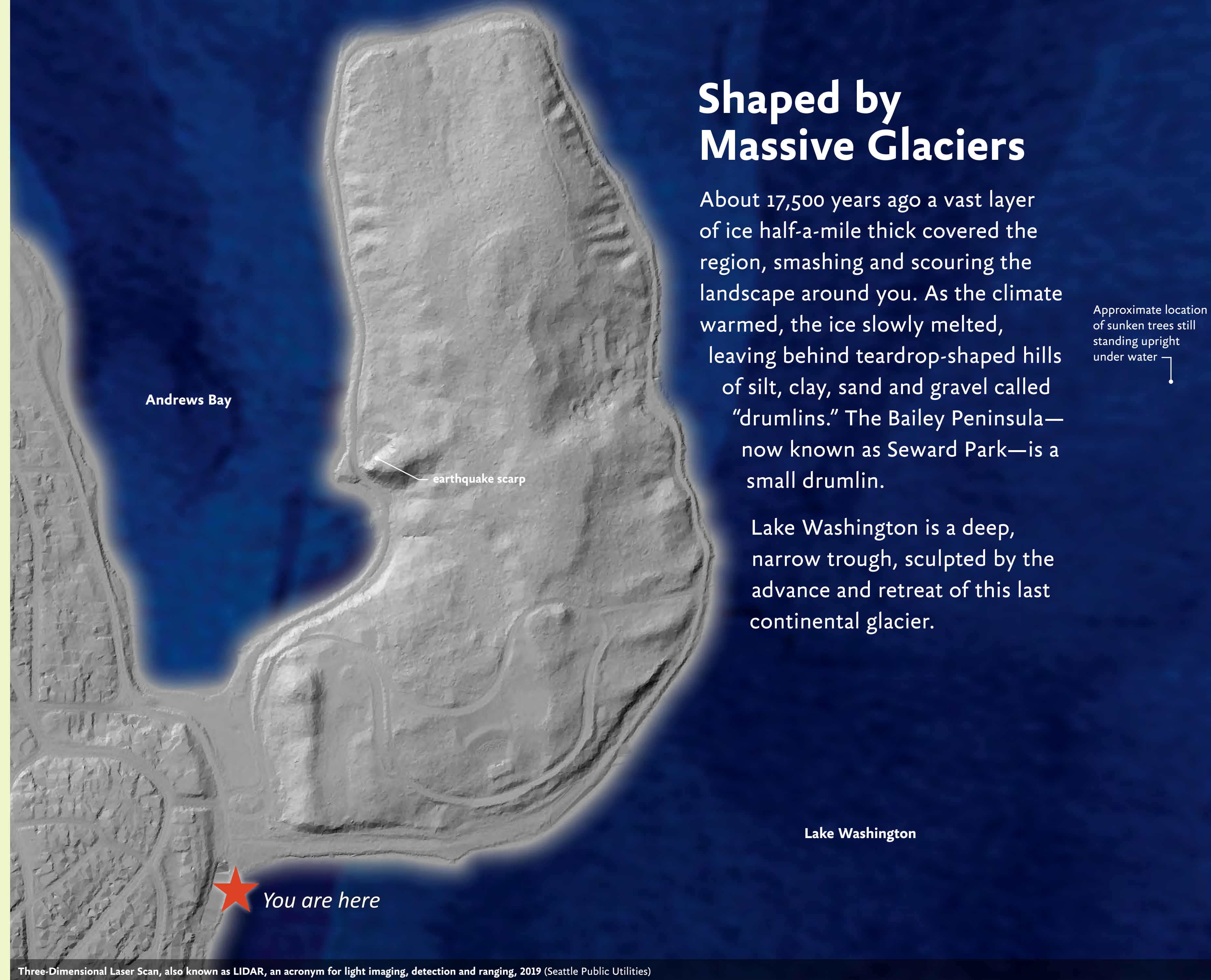
# A Land Left Behind

## Shaped by Massive Glaciers

About 17,500 years ago a vast layer of ice half-a-mile thick covered the region, smashing and scouring the landscape around you. As the climate warmed, the ice slowly melted, leaving behind teardrop-shaped hills of silt, clay, sand and gravel called "drumlins." The Bailey Peninsula—now known as Seward Park—is a small drumlin.

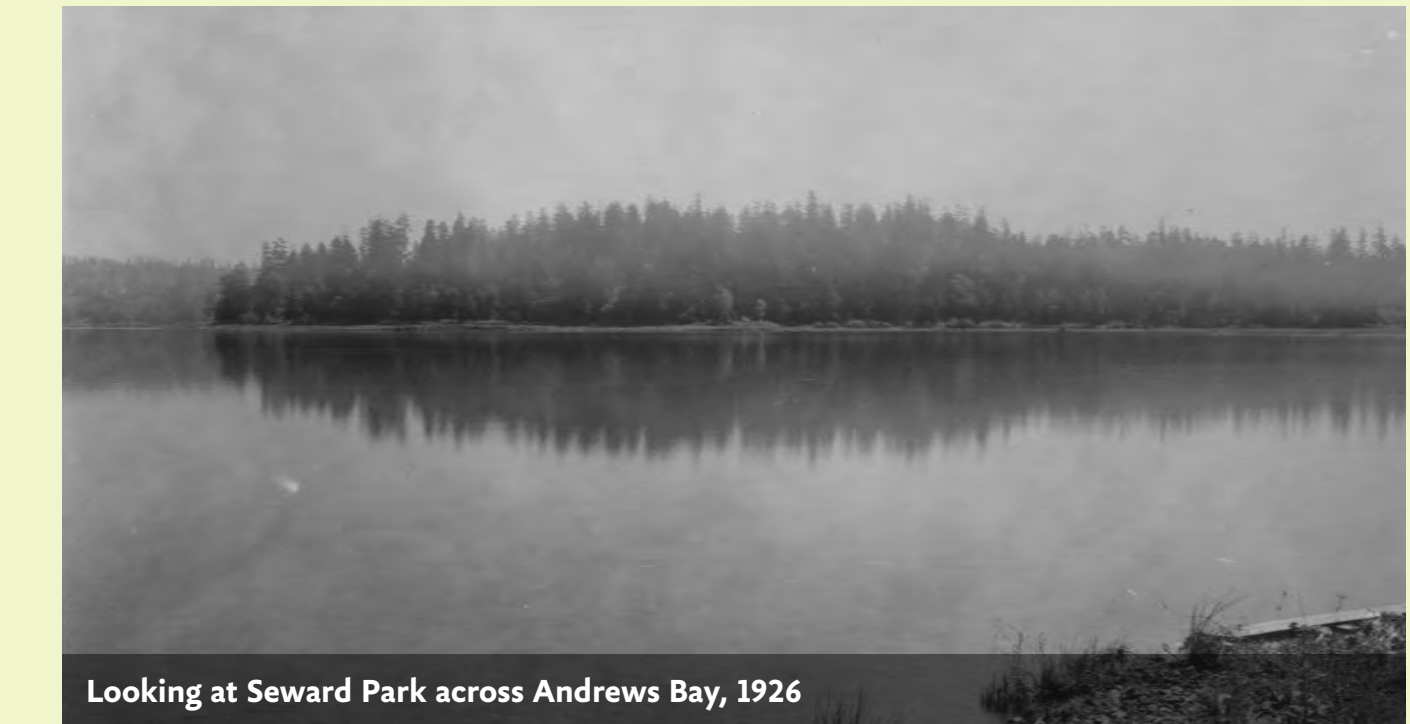
Lake Washington is a deep, narrow trough, sculpted by the advance and retreat of this last continental glacier.

Approximate location of sunken trees still standing upright under water



## Nature in Abundance

After the last glacier receded about 14,000 years ago, herbaceous plants began to colonize the barren rock left behind. A thousand years later, the peninsula's now-dominant species, Douglas fir, became established, followed by a mix of western red cedar, big leaf maple, madrone, western hemlock, and more.



These trees make up Seward Park's Magnificent Forest canopy—covering 120 acres on the northern two-thirds of the peninsula. This forest is a rare remnant of the lowland old-growth forest that characterized much of the region. Most of the trees on the isolated drumlin are younger than 200 years old—relatively young for a mature forest.

The forest and lake were home to a multitude of flora and fauna. This little drumlin still provides habitat for a variety of species. You can see bald eagles, pileated woodpeckers, screech owls, and dozens more bird species, along with raccoons, deer mice, and many insects. The surrounding lake and shoreline are home to the iconic salmon and many other kinds of fish and waterfowl, as well as muskrats, beavers, river otters, and red-eared slider turtles.

### Oligocene epoch

26-37 million years ago

Seward Park—and all the land west of the Cascade Mountains—is submerged under the sea. Turret snail and clam fossils are still found in rocks beneath the soil here.

### 15,000 years ago

Glaciers shape the peninsula that will become Seward Park.

### 4,000 years ago

One of the Puget Sound region's oldest intact settlements is active at West Point in Seattle's Discovery Park.

### About 1,100 years ago

An earthquake in the Seattle Fault zone creates the sunken forests and the earthquake scarp at Seward Park.





## First People

The earliest people to navigate Lake Washington's waters were the ancestors of modern-day Native American tribes that live in this region today. Archaeological sites in Puget Sound support the assertion that native people used landforms soon after the last glacial retreat.



Native Americans who lived around Puget Sound traveled long distances in their cedar canoes. In this photo, taken around 1912 by Edward S. Curtis, a family sets off across the waters of Puget Sound. Their large vessel was carved from a single cedar trunk. (MOHAI)

For thousands of years, native people lived along the lake's shores and its tributaries in village communities, closely tied by kinship, trade, and social and cultural activity. Native residents used trail systems and waterways to travel, gather food and other resources to support their families, and trade with neighboring villages to establish and maintain relationships.

## Traditional Names

Lushootseed is the language spoken by the Coast Salish tribes. Seward Park and the surrounding vicinity had at least seven traditional place names documented in the early 1900s. Here are a few examples:

- s.kebe'qsed**—nose (tip of Seward Park)
- s.tqucid**—choked up mouth (name of the creek that empties into Wetmore Slough)
- dexwuRad**—place of loon
- cqa'lapseb**—word used to describe the isthmus

# Making a Home on the Lake



Waterlines, an interpretive photorealistic and hand painted rendering of the Seattle area in the mid-19th century, just prior to non-Native settlement, 2016 (Burke Museum)

## Sbabidid

Prior to the twentieth century, Lake Washington flowed to the south end of the lake, out through the (now dry) Black River in Renton.

*"Located a few miles south of Seward Park, along the historic Black River was the village known as Sbabidid. The first people to inhabit this village were able to live a comfortable life by utilizing the bountiful water and land resources provided by Mother Nature."*

—Warren KingGeorge, Muckleshoot

Native people in the Puget Sound region were known collectively as Coast Salish people. A group of the Duwamish people living around Lake Washington were called "People of the Large Lake" or the "Lake People"—**xachua'bsh** (hah-choo-AHBSH).

## Loss of Land and Traditions

The people of the traditional village of **Sbabidid** endured hundreds of years of change. Descendants still live in the Puget Sound region and include members of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, established under the Point Elliot Treaty of 1855.



Coast Salish family in camp on the beach drying fish, ca. 1900 (UW Special Collections)

The arrival of European-Americans brought immediate and rapid changes to the traditional lifeways in the Puget Sound region. After thousands of years living near Lake Washington, the "Lake People" were displaced by European-American settlement, some signing treaties to retain rights to traditionally-used resources, but losing their native homelands.

Shortly after the treaty signing, the isthmus was purchased by one of Seattle's early schoolteachers, David Graham. In 1868, most of the platted peninsula was bought by Philip Ritz from the Washington Territory for \$1.25 an acre.

### 1770s

A smallpox epidemic devastates the Coast Salish tribes and other Native Americans tribes throughout the Northwest.

### 1851

On November 13 the schooner *Exact* drops off the 22 members of the Denny party at Alki.

### 1852

J. Harvey and E. A. Clark—the first European-American settlers to the area—stake claims on Clark's Prairie adjacent to the peninsula.

### 1853

On March 2, U.S. President Franklin Pierce signs an act creating the Washington Territory.

### 1854

**Treaty of Medicine Creek**  
From 1854-1855, following treaty signings, ancestors of modern-day tribal communities are displaced to reservations, and European-Americans move in to inhabit former native village sites.

### 1855

**Treaty of Point Elliott**  
Signed on January 22, this treaty between the U.S. government and multiple Puget Sound tribes establishes reservations and cedes land to the U.S. government. It reserves rights for native people to hunt, fish, and gather on traditional lands.

### 1867

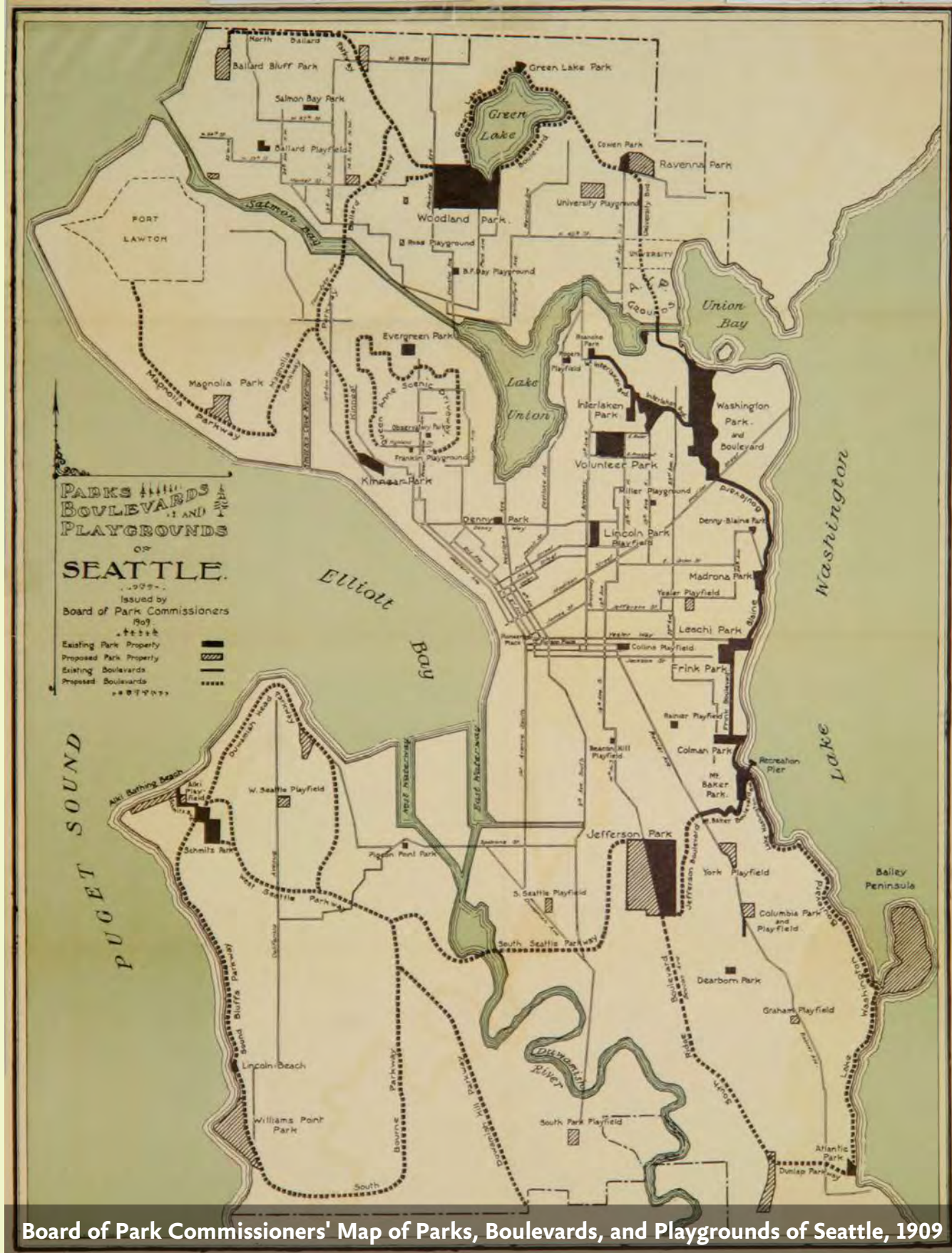
**U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia**  
Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward—for whom Seward Park was named—is largely responsible. The opening of Alaska ushers in a period of prosperity for the city, as Seattle serves as the main transportation and supply hub for hopeful prospectors departing for the Yukon.





## City Beautiful

Joining the nationally popular City Beautiful Movement, Seattle's first Park Board commissioned the Olmsted Brothers to develop a citywide park system, and Council approved it on October 19, 1903. The main feature was a 20-mile landscaped boulevard, linking most of the city's existing and planned parks and greenbelts.



Beyond Seward Park, the Olmsted Brothers designed 36 more Seattle parks. Their plans enhanced each park's distinct attributes while ensuring that each fit into its surroundings. Thanks to these early endeavors, Seattleites enjoy more than 6,400 acres of open space and high-quality parks today.

# Planning a Community Park

## A Peninsula Park

The City purchased the entire Bailey Peninsula in 1911 for \$322,000 after John Charles Olmsted echoed Park Superintendent E.O. Schwagerl's recommendation that this unique property be acquired for a public park.

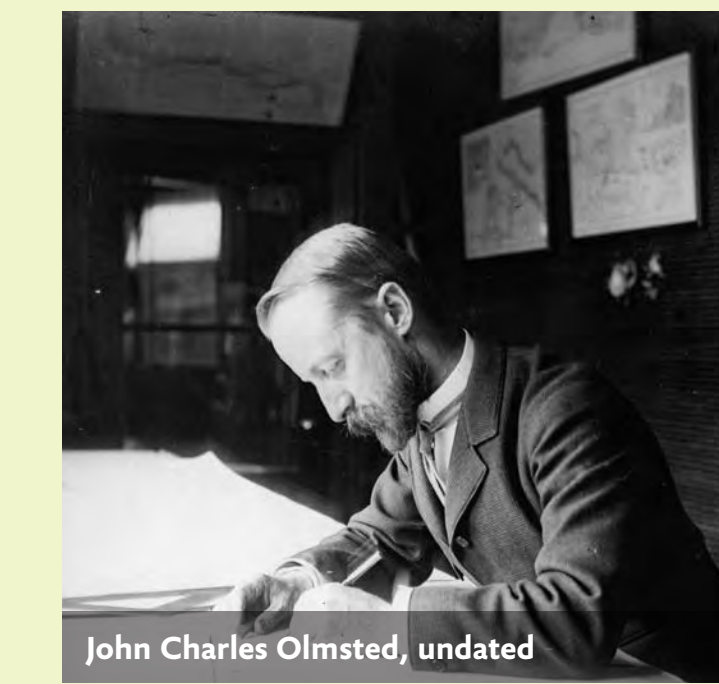
Over the next year, the Olmsted Brothers developed a plan—a mix of "active" and "passive" recreation facilities around the edges, with most of the land preserved in its natural state. A dance pavilion, boat docks, playgrounds, bathhouses and picnic areas were among the active facilities proposed, while the woods and most of the shoreline were reserved for passive recreation.

Even though the City did not implement the plan in full, Seward Park remains a testament to the Olmsted Brothers' vision.



Preliminary Plan for Seward Park, Olmsted Brothers, 1912 (City of Seattle)

## The Olmsted Brothers Design Seward Park



John Charles Olmsted, undated

John Charles Olmsted's influence on Seattle is unmistakable. Aware of the city's ongoing growth, he knew residents would need parks for relief from

"the restraining and confining conditions of the town," advising the city to "secure and preserve...these advantages of water and mountain views."



Early cyclists resting at a fork in the path, undated (Michael Maslan, Pauldorpat.com)



Along a path near Lake Washington, undated (Michael Maslan, Pauldorpat.com)

"...every advantage should be taken of differing conditions to give each one a distinct individuality of its own."

—John Charles Olmsted

1884

Seattle's park system is born when David Denny donates a five-acre tract to the City to be used as a park.

1889

William Bailey buys the peninsula. The Great Seattle Fire destroys most of the buildings in Pioneer Square on June 6.

1892

Parks Superintendent E. O. Schwagerl first proposes acquiring the peninsula for a park.

1896

Dawson Charlie, Skookum Jim Mason, and George Washington Carmack find gold in a tributary of the Klondike River in Canada's Yukon Territory, marking the start of one of the greatest gold rushes in history. In 1897 and 1898, thousands board ships in Seattle to head north in search of gold. As a result, Seattle's population more than quadruples in 10 years.

1901

Some 10,000 of about 100,000 Seattle residents ride along bike paths built in the late 1890s.

October 19, 1903

Seattle City Council adopts Olmsted Brothers' park system plan.

1911

Seattle purchases the peninsula for \$332,000 and establishes Seward Park.

1913

When Lake Washington Boulevard is extended from Mount Baker Park to Seward Park, the Parks Department decides to build a land bridge with a circular turnaround, rather than follow the Olmsted Brothers' plan for a bridge over the isthmus.





## Japanese Gifts

In 1929, the Japanese Association of North America gave Seattle 3,500 cherry trees to commemorate the visit of diplomats from Japan. Many of these trees were planted at Seward Park. Some still stand in the entrance circle. Most of the cherry trees now in Seward Park were given to Seattle by Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki for the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial.



A delegation from Japan plants cherry trees, December 1929 (DENSHO)

In 1930, the City of Yokohama sent an eight-ton Taiko-Gata stone lantern to thank Seattle for its assistance after the Great Kanto Earthquake. The lantern still stands at the park entrance.

To promote friendship and trade, Seattle's Japanese-American community in 1934 constructed a Torii gate near the park entry. The original deteriorated and was removed in 1986. In 2013, the Friends of Seward Park raised funds to design and build the Torii gate that stands today.

**1916**

The land separating Union Bay on Lake Washington and Portage Bay on Lake Union is breached at the Montlake Cut to create the Lake Washington Ship Canal. This lowers Lake Washington by nine feet, making the seasonal island a permanent peninsula.

**1917**

Lake Washington Ship Canal and Hiram Chittenden Locks open, lowering the lake level and drying up the Black River entirely. This destroys critical wetland and river habitat for juvenile salmon and other fish, wildlife, and plant species, which in turn impacts resources critical to the continuation of traditional lifeways for native residents.

**1920**

John Charles Olmsted dies with much of his plan for Seward Park unrealized.

**1923**

Park attendance more than doubles to 48,685 from 21,785 in 1919.

**1927**

The Seward Park Inn is constructed.

**1929**

Stock market crashes, triggering the Great Depression.

**1934**

Rainier District summer festival is founded.

**1936**

Lower Loop Road and fish hatchery open.

# Building the Park



Aerial Photograph, 1937 (King County Road Services Division)

## The Seward Park Inn



Seward Park Inn, 1935 (RVHS)

In the early 1920s, concessionaires operated stands in the park on a seasonal basis. In 1927, the Seward Park Inn was built and still stands as the park's first permanent building.

Informally called "Ye Seward Park Inn" for its quaint architecture, the building exemplifies distinguished Seattle architect Alban Shay's historical revival design approach in its half-timbered Tudor Revival style.

During the Great Depression Catherine and J. Frank Redfield sold refreshments and lived there with their two daughters until 1943.

## Hard Work During Tough Times

Many of Seward Park's original structures were built by unemployed Seattle residents, recruited by Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration.



Bathhouse with beach steps, 1931

**Bathhouse and Swimming Docks**—In 1918, a wooden bathhouse was constructed. When rebuilt with brick in 1927, it provided dressing rooms, restrooms, and showers. Sand was brought in and swimming docks, beach steps, and a walkway were built. In 1969 the little-used dressing area was converted to an art studio.

**Sewer Outfall**—By the 1920s, the growing population in Rainier Valley gave rise to health concerns. In 1922, the State Department of Health ordered that untreated



Intercepting sewer construction, 1935

sewage no longer be discharged into the lake, and intercepting sewers were constructed to divert those outfalls.





## Filipino Independence Celebration

In 1946, President Harry S Truman signed a bill allowing Filipinos to become U.S. citizens. On July 4th of that year, the Philippines gained independence as a sovereign nation. To celebrate, Filipinos in Seattle began an annual tradition of picnics at Pinoy Hill in Seward Park. The picnic's date was later changed to June 12, to commemorate the Philippine Republic's 1898 Declaration of Independence from Spain.

## Arts in the Park



The Seward Park Art Studio (originally the bathhouse) offered a range of arts and crafts classes starting in the 1970s. Ceramic artists later formed the self-supporting Seward Park Clay Studio.



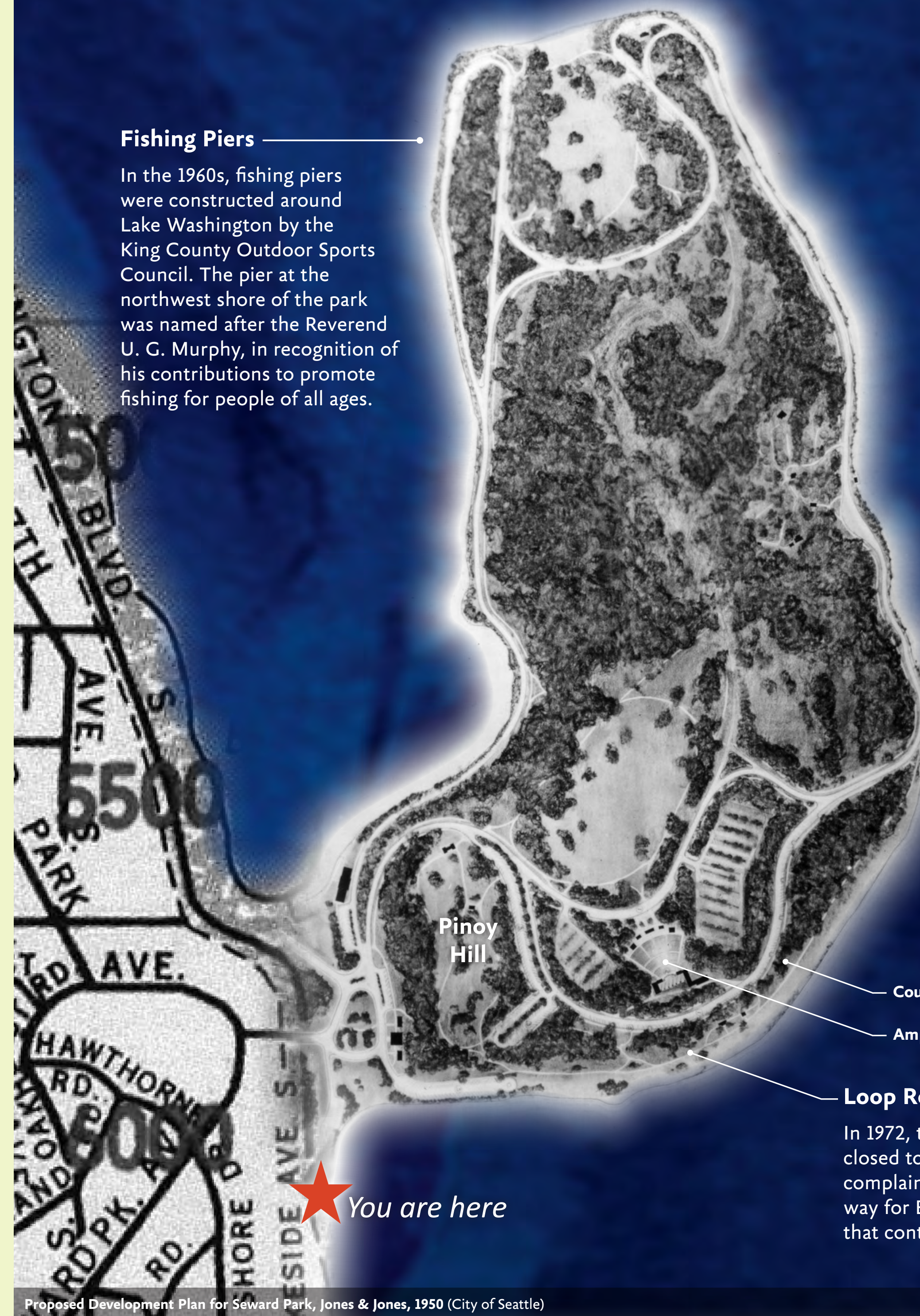
# A Popular Place to Gather

## Seward Park Master Plan

Put forward in 1950, the Master Plan proposed:

- An outdoor amphitheater with seating for 4,000.
- Parking spaces on either side of the amphitheater for 2,500 cars.
- 25 acres of new picnic area at the north end of the peninsula.
- Moving the road at the north and south ends of the park inland away from picnickers on the beaches.

As with the original Olmsted Brothers' 1912 plan, many—but not all—parts of the plan were completed and are being enjoyed today.



### Fishing Piers

In the 1960s, fishing piers were constructed around Lake Washington by the King County Outdoor Sports Council. The pier at the northwest shore of the park was named after the Reverend U. G. Murphy, in recognition of his contributions to promote fishing for people of all ages.

## Rainier District Summer Festival

Each summer the Rainier District held a day-long, community-wide social gathering in Seward Park. Founded in 1934 to lift spirits and promote cohesion during the Great Depression, the festival continued until the early 1990s.

As times changed, so did the festival:

- In the 1930s, the event promoted local retailers.
- During World War II, it featured military themes and patriotism.
- The 1950s celebrated the Baby Boom with a contest for biggest family.
- The 1960s included a "Battle of the Bands."
- The 1970s and 80s brought the end of the "bathing beauty" contests and the "Queen" and "Princess" titles.
- Until its last event in 1992, the festival was a summertime highlight for generations of South Seattle residents.



Boating in Lake Washington, 1950



Filipino American Independence Day picnic, 1952 (FANHIS)



The Nishimura family enjoys a picnic in the park, 1953 (DENSHO)

1952

Amphitheater stage is built and first concert is held.

1961

A Council Ring is constructed to honor Dorothy Block, an environmental activist who was instrumental in establishing King County Metro to clean up pollution in Lake Washington.

1962

Reverend Murphy Fishing Pier is constructed in Andrews Bay.

1963

Tribal members organize fish-ins as the fight for tribal fishing rights begins.

1968

A portion of Lake Washington Boulevard is closed to automobiles for the first Bicycle Sunday.

1969

Bathhouse is converted to Art Studio (now the Clay Studio).

1972

Paved loop road is permanently closed to vehicular traffic.

1974-Boldt Decision

On February 12, Federal Judge George Boldt issues a historic ruling reaffirming the rights of tribes to fish in accustomed places. The Boldt Decision allocates 50 percent of the annual catch to treaty tribes. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe resumes their treaty-reserved fishing rights in Lake Washington and its tributaries.







Heritage cedar, 2000

## Restoring Native Plants

Oak prairies (like the one at the southern end of Seward Park) are some of the most threatened ecosystems in western Washington. These prairies are home to animals and edible plants, so Native Americans maintained them against the encroachment of forests by burning. Camas, snowbrush, poison oak, and other fire-adapted prairie plants survive fires that kill Douglas firs and hemlocks.

Today we restore the prairie by planting camas, chocolate lily, Henderson's shooting star, and Roemer's fescue, thereby providing habitat for birds, butterflies, garter snakes, oak gall wasps, and other prairie animals.

The Seward Park Reforestation Project is a focused effort to reduce invasive plants and increase native plants for the next generation of forest.



Seward Park shoreline restoration, 2003

# A Healthier Lake Washington



Digitally Enhanced Satellite Image, 2017 (Apple Inc.)

Lake Washington provides critical habitat for a variety of fish species. The lake has generally very good water quality for being in a highly urban area. There is, however, concern about impact on aquatic life in the lake caused by contaminants in stormwater runoff and sewage overflows.

Many agencies have partnered to improve the lake's water quality and habitat by:

- Restoring habitat and natural shorelines.
- Managing stormwater runoff.
- Reducing sewage overflow into the lake.

The area on which you are now standing is part of a system improvement to reduce stormwater and sewage discharged to the lake. The concrete area around the tennis courts is the top of a buried 2.65-million-gallon-storage tank that holds peak flows during heavy rain. After a rain event, stormwater is pumped back into the system to be treated before discharging into Lake Washington.

## Traditions Continue

Many plants and animals found in the Seward Park area were gathered for food, medicine, and spiritual purposes. Here are a few common species listed in Lushootseed, the language spoken by the Coast Salish tribes:

scəqi?	Sockeye salmon
skʷəxʷic	Silver salmon
ḵpaʔac	Cedar tree
səkʷəbac	Alder tree
čúʔac	Maple tree
štəgʷad	Salmonberry
čaləs	Fern (bracken)
scədʔx	Nettle

Traditional teachings and values continue to be handed down to new generations. Using bark from the red and yellow cedar trees is one sacred tradition still performed by Coast Salish people in late spring. Cedar bark is great for making rope and for weaving durable baskets and rain-shedding capes and hats. Bark does not grow back in the area where it is stripped, so Coast Salish people take only what they need. This allows the tree to continue growing as a "culturally modified tree" that represent a traditional part of indigenous culture.



Stripping cedar bark, 2000

**1996**  
The Native Plant Demonstration Garden is created.

**1999**  
Friends of Seward Park is founded.

**2008**  
The Seward Park Audubon Center opens.

**2011**  
The Seward Park Centennial Celebration is held and trail markers are dedicated.

**2017**  
Construction of the new tennis courts and sewer outfall overflow tank are completed.

*Culturally significant areas and native place and animal names are provided courtesy of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. Text is written in Southern Lushootseed style. Broadly aligned Coast Salish peoples share a related language with regional dialect variants in the north and south portions of Puget Sound.*

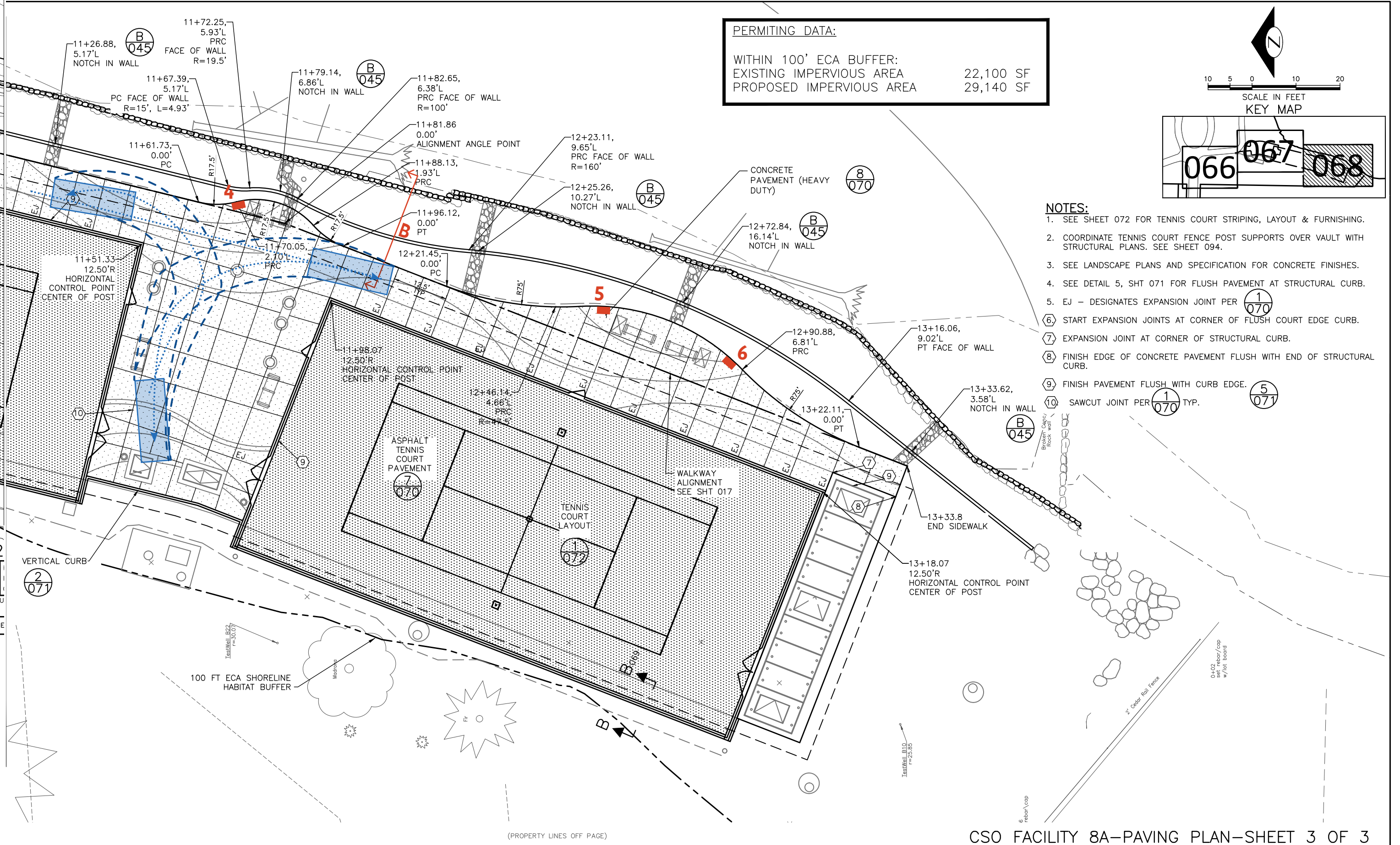
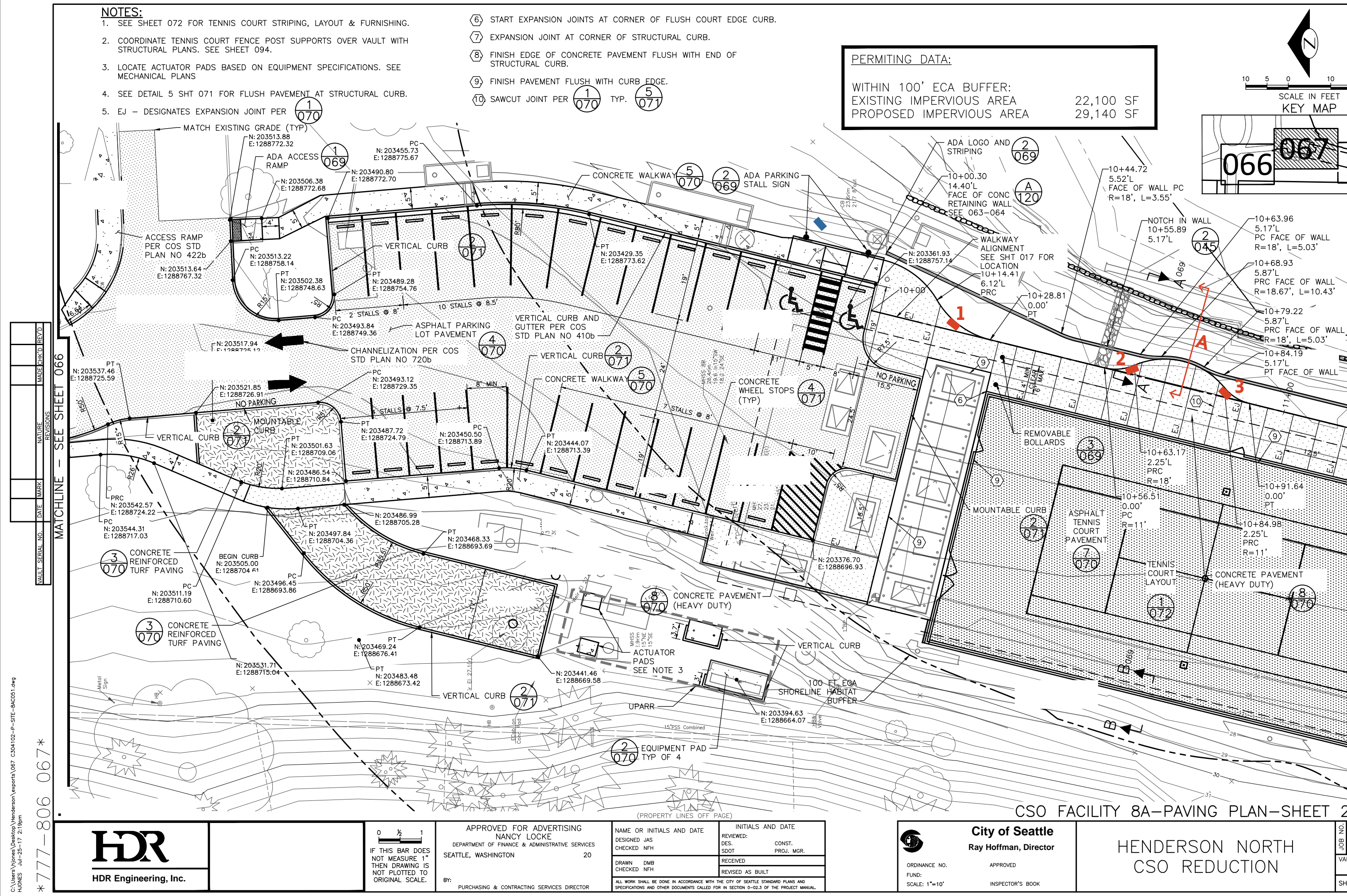
*These six historical signs were developed and installed through a cooperative agreement between Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Parks and Recreation with assistance from the Friends of Seward Park, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, the Rainier Valley Historical Society, the Audubon Society, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and HistoryLink. All photos courtesy of Seattle Municipal Archives and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe unless otherwise noted.*



To learn more, take the **Seward Park Walking Tour** by scanning the QR-code at left or typing [bit.ly/SewardWalk](https://bit.ly/SewardWalk) into your web browser.



# Proposed Sign Locations

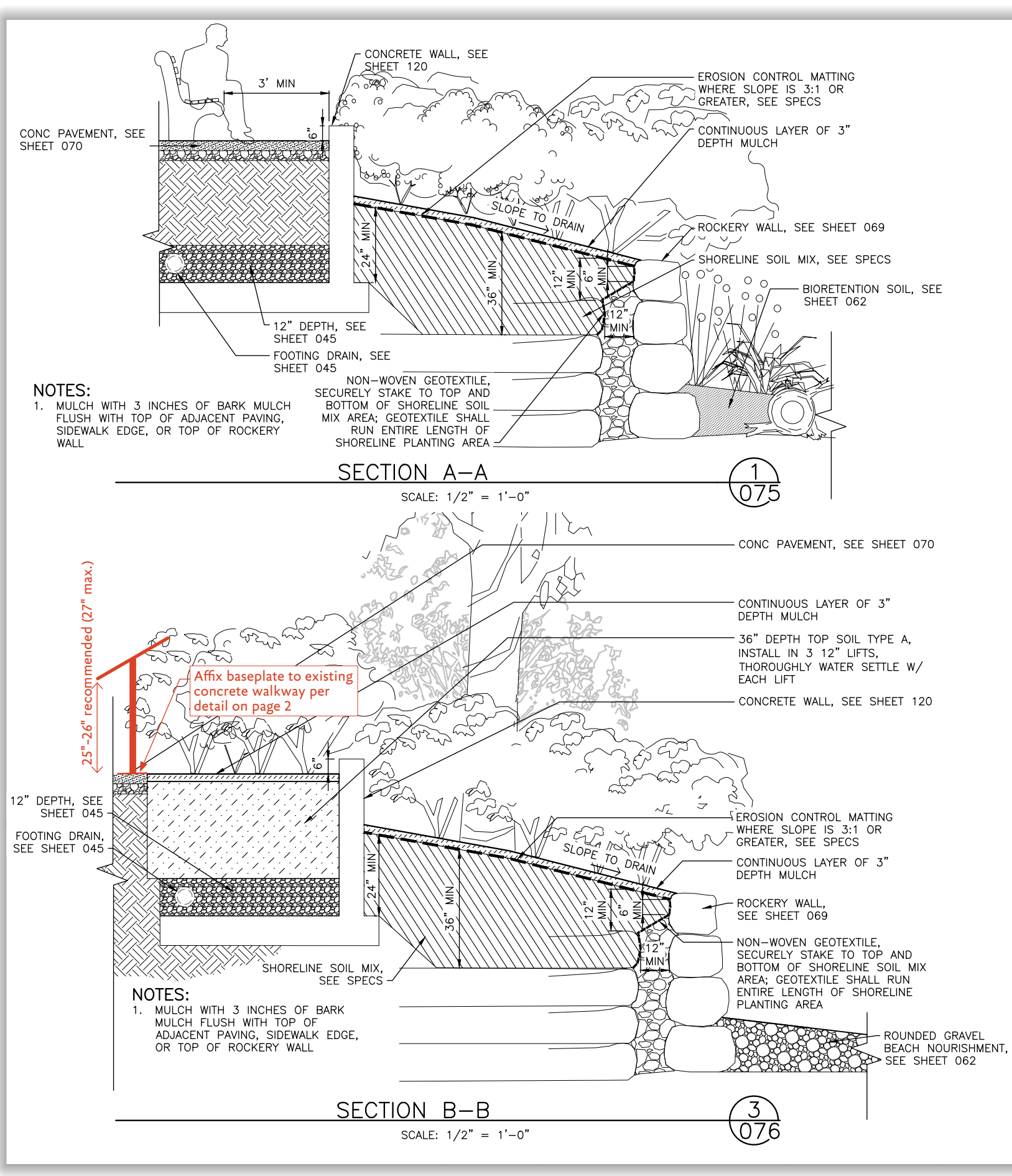


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NOTES:  
 1. MULCH WITH 3 INCHES OF BARK MULCH FLUSH WITH TOP OF ADJACENT PAVING, SIDEWALK EDGE, OR TOP OF ROCKERY WALL.

SECTION A-A  
 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

SECTION B-B  
 SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

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