



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue · 4th floor · Seattle, Washington 98104 · (206) 684-0228

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 216/01

Name and Address of Property: **Lake City Library**  
**12501 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE**

Legal Description:

Kenwood Division No. 2, Block 7, Lots 6,7,8,9 and 10

At the public meeting held on June 6, 2001, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Lake City Library as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25. 12.350:

*D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.*

*E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder*

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*Note: An overview of the public library movement and the role of that institution in the United States, a brief history of the Seattle Public Library, and a summary of the economic, social and political history of the city in the 1960s are provided in the landmark nomination of the Central Library. An overview of Modern architecture in Seattle is also reviewed in that document. As the Central Library and the branches, such as the Lake City Library, are individual buildings and elements in a system, they share this history.*

### Historic Context of Lake City

Lake City is a large area of northeast Seattle that developed primarily after World War II during the auto-oriented suburban expansion of the City. The 4.5 square mile area is bounded by Lake Washington on the east, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast on the west, and on the north by the City limits along Northeast 145<sup>th</sup> Street (State Highway No. SR523). The southern city limit line of Shoreline, which was incorporated in 1995, lies just north of Lake City.

The Lake City Library is located on 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast, two blocks west of Lake City Way Northeast, the strip-like, seven lane commercial street which serves as both State Highway No. SR522 and the central vehicle access through the neighborhood. In the two blocks north and south of 125<sup>th</sup>, on Lake City Way there is a core of pedestrian-related, one-story commercial buildings. This area is the commercial center of the neighborhood, and has been defined by the City Zoning Code as the Lake City Urban Village.

The area is generally flat, with topography that rises steeply along Lake Washington and along a hill two blocks to the west of the Library. It contains a major watershed and a ravine. Buildings in the area of the library include commercial ones, such as a bank, located to the east across 28<sup>th</sup>, and two to five story multi-family residences. Lake City's single family homes are typically located off the arterial streets, several blocks from the library; most of these are west of Lake City Way.

Developed as it was, primarily after the 1950s, the neighborhood seems very auto-oriented. With the exception of its pedestrian-related commercial core at 125<sup>th</sup> and Lake City Way, most of the contemporary commercial and multi-family buildings have easily accessed parking lots and building entries directly related to parking. The library itself sits on a 39,144 square foot lot, approximately 300' by 130' with a 33-stall parking lot to the north. It shares a block with the small Davis Park, which includes the Lake City Community Center, and a four-story, brick-clad, ca. 1970 era apartment building.

Lake City is a district presently made up of several residential areas, including Olympic Hills, Pinehurst, Victory Heights, Meadowbrook, Cedar Park.. Many of these are named for their nearby school, playground or park. The Thornton Creek Watershed is located within the Lake City area. To the east, along Lake Washington, are the high-end single family residential areas of Inverness and Matthews Beach.

The district originated with a village known as Pontiac, a settlement located around a brick yard on the northwest shore of Lake Washington. Farms and residential settlement grew away from the lake shore to upland properties along an early road between Ballard and Seattle and Bothell through what was known as Cedar Park. Seattle's city limits moved northward in a series of steps as it added residential neighborhoods to its jurisdiction. In 1907 it annexed Ballard, and by 1940 it included northern neighborhoods up to Northwest 85<sup>th</sup> to Northeast 65<sup>th</sup> Streets. Thus Lake City remained unincorporated and sparsely developed until after World War II.

In part because of its relatively late development, there are no designated landmarks in Lake City. The older Cedar Park School, at 135<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast has been adapted for use as the Cedar Park Arts Center/Artwood Studios, a rental live/work co-op for artist. One of the older churches in the area is the Lake City Presbyterian Church, at Northeast 123<sup>rd</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Northeast. These two buildings may be identified by some in the community as ad hoc landmarks. The Sand Point Naval Station, located between Northeast 80<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> Streets, about 3 miles southeast of the library, includes portions determined eligible for the National Register as a historic district. Its buildings and site recall much of Seattle's military past. Northgate, located 2.5 miles southwest from the library, is credited with having been the first internal shopping mall in the nation after its construction in 1950. The Jackson Park Golf Course is 1.5 miles northwest of the library.

Properties in Lake City that have architectural significance may include the primary facade remnants of a bank building, located at the southwest corner of Lake City Way and NE 125<sup>th</sup> Street, which has been incorporated as a gateway into the design of the small, urban Lake City Park. Several early Modern styled buildings cited by Victor Steinbrueck, in *A Guide to Seattle, 1850 – 1953*, include two houses designed by James Chiarelli, located at 843-847 (North)east 100<sup>th</sup> Street (1949, one of which remains), and the Lake City Clinic, designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, at Northeast 125<sup>th</sup> Street and 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Northeast (1952).

As with many close-in Seattle suburban neighborhoods, this area exemplifies a pattern of post war growth. Private automobiles and single family residences were preferred by the middle class by the 1940s. As a result, the neighborhoods of Lake City are defined by streets and arterials, and by larger lots that contrast with Seattle's older "streetcar" suburbs. Because of the linear prominence of Lake City Way, and the neighborhoods indistinct edges, Lake City may seem difficult to identify as a discrete place. The topography is a series of relatively flat plateaus, and the man-made environment is strong. However, natural systems in Lake City include Thornton Creek, which originates north of 193<sup>rd</sup> at Ronald Bog and outlets into Lake Washington at Matthews Beach.

The area of Seattle designated as the Northeast District, was home to 23,673 people in 1990. 15% of its residents are over 65, and 18%, or 4,322, are 17 or under. 28% of residents have bachelor or graduate degrees. Statistics of median household size and income (2.3 people and \$32,696), average age (35.5 years), and work status (81% of those 17 to 65 years old) suggest that area residents are relatively youthful, middle and working-class. About 65% live in owned housing units. The median age of all housing units is 41 years: 30% were built before 1950, and 66% between 1950 and 1979. According to the 1999 Neighborhood Plan, about 50% of residents have moved into the district in the last 15 years; many of these are immigrants who come from outside the U. S.

### **Overview of the City's Branch Libraries**

The area in which the Lake City Library is located was annexed into the City of Seattle in 1954. However, city residents living in northeast Seattle received their first municipal library services long before this date. In March 1906 the University Branch opened in the University Pharmacy which was located at the entrance to the University of Washington campus. That same year the Library System established a separate Branch Department. The first deposit stations followed in 1907.

In 1908 the City received a grant of \$105,000 for construction of three branches including Greenlake, West Seattle and the University Branch. (Two additional branches – Fremont and Yesler/Douglass-Truth Libraries -- were funded by a \$70,000 Carnegie Grant in 1911.)

By 1913 library patrons throughout the city were served from 495 distribution points: the Central Library, six drugstore deposit stations, seven branch libraries, six playgrounds, eight special deposit stations, 24 fire engine houses, library station facilities, and 443 separate schoolrooms. The system's Schools Division, called the "Teachers Room," opened under the supervision of the Children's Department in 1910. A Stations Division opened in 1921. In the late 1920s, responsibility for library service to school children shifted, and the Library System and Seattle Public Schools created the first model school library in Hamilton Intermediate School in Wallingford.

In 1930 the Library published a Ten Year Program which included studies of the population and collection growth; library revenues and endowment funds; school, municipal reference and county services; and expansion of the Central Library. Circulation during the 1920s and early 1930s grew along with the city's literate population. Circulation reached a highpoint in 1932 by which time the library's collection had exceeded 450,000 volumes and the number of borrowers surpassed 100,000. With the Depression and cutbacks in municipal funds, this all changed, and for a full decade many services were curtailed. Library hours were restricted, extension services eliminated, and in 1933 all branch departments were abolished. All deposit stations were closed and book mobile services ceased. Only ten branches remained active.

### **A History of the Lake City Library**

In 1935 a small group of philanthropic-minded Lake City women – Mrs. Charles Lyons, Jr., Mrs. Wise and Mrs. Robert Musser -- organized the community's first public library under the sponsorship of the local Pacific Improvement Club. The small library collection was located in the basement of the old Lake City School, a building dating from ca. 1910 which was located on the site of the present library building, and was open one day a week.

Seattle's population boomed during World War II and its library system expanded in response. In 1941 free library services were given to all soldiers and sailors in the Puget Sound region regardless of their residency; in 1942 these services were granted to all war workers in the area. Between 1942 and 1948, 25 library stations were established including one at Sand Point; it operated from January 1943 to October 1945. During the war, Seattle's head librarian, John Richards, had already begun planning for the city's post-war era. In an effort to expand services immediately following the war, the City's library services were extended to the Children's Orthopedic Hospital on Sand Point Way in February 1946.

In 1942 King County residents in unincorporated areas, which included Lake City, approved a tax to establish a county library, and in January 1943 the King County Library System was created. King County contracted with the Seattle Public Library for services, including those for Lake City. Until 1944, however, the Lake City Library was staffed by community volunteers; by that year the collection had grown to 2,600 volumes.

In 1949 King County established a public library in a firehouse at 12534 – 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast (Station No. 39). By 1954 circulation had risen to 57,500 home loans. In 1955, the library was moved from the Fire Station into 2,200 square feet of temporary space in a newer building, Shoreline Savings and Loan, located across 28<sup>th</sup> Street Northeast, due east of the present library.

Expansion of post war library services continued in the 1950s in both Seattle and King County. Seattle's library expanded its services in the 1950s to include chamber concerts, teas, book clubs, and annual classroom visits to 150 public schools. In 1955 the cooperative plan for public school library administration by SPL and the Seattle Public Schools came to a close, and the library ceased cataloging books for schools. Classroom collections in elementary schools were discontinued in 1958.

Two library bond issues were presented to the citizens of Seattle to fund a new Central Library and additional branch libraries, in 1950 and 1952. Both bonds failed, largely due to the unstable economy,

influenced by inflationary prices, limited materials, and the onset of the Korean War. In response to the bond failure, the City Council allotted funds from the city's Cumulative Reserve Fund for three new branch libraries and a new vehicle for Mobile Services. North East, Greenwood, and Henry Libraries all finished construction in 1954.

In 1954 Seattle annexed nearly 15 square miles, including the Lake City and Northgate areas, increasing its population by 54,000. Two branch libraries were transferred to Seattle -- the County's Lake City Library, and the Oakview Branch at 525 North 105<sup>th</sup> Street and North Evanston in the Bitter Lake neighborhood. Library services for Lake City residents were provided by these libraries, and also by the more distant Greenwood and North East Branch Libraries (opened respectively in January and June 1954) and SPL's Book Mobile services, which were restarted after the war in 1957.

In 1956, a \$5 million library bond issue passed, the bulk of which was designated to fund a new downtown Central Library. The remaining funds were allotted for construction of three additional new branch libraries (Southwest, Ballard and Magnolia), and the purchase of a library site in Lake City.

The Lake City Lions Club, which was established in 1940, was instrumental in the site acquisition. Through its fundraising efforts the club had secured two acres adjacent to the present library site, in 1944 - 1947, and acquired a small, 18' x 30' portable building for use by the Federated Boys Club as a recreation center.

Eventually this temporary facility was replaced by a one-story, 5,000 square foot Youth Center, which was opened in October 1957. The Lions Club envisioned a park with a playground, tennis court, library, cultural center and pool. The Lions Club property was deeded to Seattle's Department of Parks and Recreation Department (DOPAR), and is presently known as Albert Davis Park. In 1958, DOPAR acquired the present library site, which was then the site of the old Lake City School, for \$19,500. At that time the Lake City Lions Club began planning a two-story 14,000 square foot expansion of the Youth Center to include a new public library. By 1963, the group's plans were changed, and a 4,000 square foot addition, designed by Architect A. V. Peterson, was eventually constructed. Meanwhile, the demand for library services in the community had grown. Circulation in the decade after annexation, 1954 – 1964, increased 320%. The site adjacent to the Youth Center was acquired by SPL in 1963.

SPL records indicate that a 30,000 square foot library site was acquired for \$50,000, using up the last of the City's 1956 Bond funds. (As the Lions Club gave the property to the City, this sum was used instead to assist in construction of the Youth Center addition.) The City contributed an additional \$68,000 for books and \$73,000 for expanding the building fund for this library.

Community support was essential in the development of the present library as it was in creation of the original public library in Lake City. As was noted by Roman Mostar in a November 1965 address to the Chamber of Commerce, the history of the library in Lake City was "A classic example of the grassroots movement in starting a library." Construction of the new branch library may have been of particular interest to then mayor, Dorm Braman, as he was then a former businessman in Lake City, and owner of a local lumber yard. Regardless, Lake City residents still characterize their

community as “a community that’s always done for itself,” according to long-time resident, Claire Chamberlain, and this spirit is reflected in the history of their public library.

The Lake City Library was designed by architect John Morse, and constructed by the Bordner Construction Company, general contractor. It was dedicated in November 1965, one and a half years after the opening of the Magnolia Library. Thus the Lake City Library was the last of Seattle’s seven Modern-era libraries constructed in the 1950s and 1960s.

The cost of the new library totaled \$344,522. The construction cost for the building with built-in equipment was approximately \$222,406, or \$23.47/square foot. When it opened the library contained open shelf capacity for 40,400 volumes and 3,600 closed stack capacity, for a total of 44,000. The reported cost of the art gates, designed and fabricated by sculptor George Tsutakawa, was \$5,500.

After its opening, the library design was recognized at local and national levels with design awards from the Seattle chapter and national American Institute of Architects. It was honored by an architectural award of excellence, given by the American Library Association in 1966. The *Library Journal* of December of that year described the challenges of the site and building design:

Because the best site available for the Lake City Branch was in a confused and commercially cluttered area, distinguished only by its nonentity, the library building was designed to command attention by its strong lines and unusual design. An inward looking building, the branch is unaggressively contemporary in design, characterized by low semi-circular windows and matching gateway . . . The strength of the design lies in the use of large expanses of red brick, rounded corners and enclosed courtyard . . . A quality of openness and freedom is achieved within the library by a total absence of supporting columns.

In 1967 the building was published in *Architectural Record*, where it was recognized for “the strong architectural treatment of the brick walls and. . . low arched openings,” and the “restful and inviting” and flexible interior space which permitted “a variety of arrangements to delineate special areas: adult reading, children’s section, even a browsing area.” The publication concluded that the building design made it “an appropriately dignified and distinctive civic building, and minimized the impact on it of the unattractive commercial area in which it is located.”

Locally the Lake City Library was received with surprise and compliments. “It was a revolutionary design. . . John Morse took the unspectacular non-view site of the Old Lake City School and transformed it into a readers paradise.” The library’s impact, in terms of patronage, was immediate, and by 1967 its circulation accounted for 10% of the entire Seattle Public Library system. Local residents still remark on the building’s beauty due to its “unique design.”

### **The Architect, John M. Morse**

John M. (Jack ) Morse, was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on August 23, 1911 and died in Seattle July 26, 2000. During his 60+ year career he designed many well recognized public and

educational buildings in the Seattle area. Morse, who could be characterized as a structural rationalist, was devoted to clarity in architectural expression and was an advocate of urban design.

John Morse was educated at the Milton Academy, Harvard University where he graduated with a Bachelors degree in 1934. For the next three years he taught school in Loomis, Massachusetts. He then returned to Harvard where he graduated with a Masters in Architecture from the Graduate School of Design in 1940. In Boston he worked as a designer for Harvard architect-professor Walter Bogner and as construction superintendent for C. B. Ross Company, a general contractor in 1941-1942.

In 1942 John Morse came to Seattle. He worked for the Boeing Company in its Engineering Department in 1943 –1944, and as designer for the architecture firm of Chiarelli and Kirk in 1945. He formed his own architectural firm in 1945, which was succeeded by the firm of Bassetti and Morse from January 1947 to April 1962. According to interviews with John Morse and Fred Bassetti in a 1952 issue of *House and Home*, their practice “was devoted largely to residential design, from custom homes to development and public housing projects.”

The firm’s work expanded beyond the residential market in the ensuing decade. Bassetti and Morse ended the partnership under amicable conditions in April 1962. During its fifteen years, the firm’s projects included schools for Mercer Island, Highline and Seattle School Districts, and educational buildings at Western Washington College in Bellingham, at Central Washington College in Ellensburg and at the University of Washington’s Seattle campus; housing for the military, the administrative and hangar buildings for the King County Airport, and entrance gates for Seattle’s Century 21 Fairgrounds.

Morse was an active participant in the AIA, having joined the organization in 1947. He was elected president of the State Chapter in 1953, and made an AIA Fellow (FAIA) in 1968, joining only fifteen other men so-recognized in Seattle. He was very civic-minded, and was appointed to the Greater Seattle Housing Council in 1958. He was a member of the King County Planning Commission 1962 – 1967, a juror for the 1968 National Awards, and a member of the Seattle Urban Design Advisory Board. In 1969, he worked with Paul Kirk and Kirk Wallace McKinley on the Pike Place Market Urban Renewal project. During his career John Morse became an articulate proponent of urban design and civic initiatives in urban planning.

The commission for designing the new Lake City Library was given to Morse in the early 1960s. His reputation as a Modern designer was established by that time by previous work. Bassetti and Morse were recognized nationally by three design awards for residences by 1952. The firm received one of five National AIA merit awards in 1953, for the Marshall Forrest home in Bellingham. Two similar awards were given for the Lakeview Elementary School on Mercer Island and Gerald Martin Residence in 1954. Victor Steinbrueck cited four buildings designed by Morse and Bassetti in [A Guide to Seattle Architecture 1850 -1953](#). These were the William James House located at 7721 – 31<sup>st</sup> Northeast (1951), the Gamma Rho Apartments at 4400 Fremont Avenue North (by Bassetti & Morse with Wendell Lovett Associates, 1950) and both Morse’s and Bassetti’s own homes in the Hilltop Community, southeast of Bellevue (1950 – 1953).

Morse was awarded a Seattle AIA Chapter Medal in 1966 for the design of the Lake City Library. Other noteworthy projects of his included the Lake Hills and Bothell Libraries for King County; the Swimming Pool and Gym at Garfield High School; the Zoology Building, Kincaid Hall and School of Social Work at UW; the East Shore Unitarian Church in Bellevue, the Federal Way Clinic for Group Health, the Glacier Bay Lodge for the National Park Service and private residences in Bellevue's Hilltop Community and Seattle.

The design for the library was unusual because of its response to the site and the resulting introverted building layout. As with other Modern-era libraries, John Morse created a clear relationship between the building's interior and a landscaped exterior setting, but with enclosed courtyards. He selected brick as the primary exterior material because of its enduring appearance and structural bearing quality. The bearing brick perimeter walls consisted of concrete within two, unclad single wythes at both the exterior and interior. While the plan basically consisted of rectangular forms that made up a "T" shape, the outer corners of the perimeter walls and the back courtyard wall were shaped with a 5' radius. The curves further emphasized the monolithic horizontal plane of the exterior walls, and the plasticity of interior space. This radius shape of the walls is reflected also in the long, curvilinear circulation desk.

Morse's use of radius walls, simple arched openings, and soldier courses of brick provided the only details in the monolithic brick walls of the library. These design features are similar to those found in the award-winning Pine Street Substation, Seattle ca. 1966, which was designed by Fred Bassetti.

The expressive facade and bearing masonry structure of the perimeter walls of the library design places Morse in the architectural tradition of "structural-rationalists." The building finds a formal context in the work of such architects as Alvar Aalto (Baker Housing Student Dorm at MIT, 1947 – 1948), Lou Kahn (in the inward-looking Yale University Art Gallery of 1951, and Richards Medical Labs, 1957 – 1965; the archetypal "typeforms" at the Phillips Exeter Academy Library, 1965 – 1971, and the Institute of Management in Ahmadabad, 1962 – 1974); and even Robert Venturi (with the reductivist design of the Guild House in Philadelphia, 1962 – 1966).

The original Lake City Library building design, along with the simple planting beds and the walled interior courtyards, designed with landscape architect Glen Hunt, appear to fully embody Morse's vision of an inward-centered, serene and contained interior. Within its thick, muscular masonry walls the library interior is protected from the auto-intense exterior setting of Lake City.

Morse articulated his rationalist, environmental approach to design in a 1968 jury critique of the profession that he helped write: "The profession has too obviously become the visual connection with the affluent sector of our society . . . In terms of esthetics, (it) is . . . imbued with the tricky and voguish. Architecture has become almost an art of fashion in which esthetic norms, such as primary geometry, structural exposure, or opulence, become the dominant replacement for environmental design. As in art . . . architecture in a la mode esthetics are not done with conviction but with opulence."

A retrospective view of the public buildings designed by John Morse suggest their solidity, functionality and simplicity. They appear typically as background buildings. In some specific cases, such as the Lake City Library or Garfield High School Pool, materials and structural details provide



an expressive and tectonic character. The modesty of many of his designs was intended. As noted in remarks by the 1968 National AIA Jury on which Morse served, “Some buildings should stand out but they should be public buildings which serve our highest needs.”

### **Artwork in the Lake City Library**

By the time the Lake City Library was built, the tradition of public artwork in the public library had been well established. This tradition began initially with private funding of specific pieces for the Henry Library in 1954, and with public funding of integrated artwork, such as the George Tsutakawa fountain, screens by James FitzGerald and Glen Alps and the figurative sculpture by Ray Jensen in the Central Library in 1960.

George Tsutakawa was commissioned to design and fabricate the bronze entry gate that fills the largest of the three arched openings on the east facade of the building. The gate, consists of two doors and curved side panels, and a 4.5’ tall, arched top panel, that fill together the approximately 9’ x 16.5’ opening. Coated with silicon to provide a natural metallic appearance, the gate is made up of 1/8” bronze sheets, and 2” square welded tubes to form the hollow frame. Welded sheets were used to create a series of full or partial circles and disks, 8” to 14” in diameter. The design is lighter and more transparent than many of his contemporary fountains and sculptures. (On the inside, lower left corner the gates are marked with the letters “T-U-B” for Tsutakawa, and engineer Jack Uchida, with whom he often collaborated, and Paul Billingsley, a student assistant who worked on the project.)

The gate is somewhat similar to that created for the UW Arboretum in 1976, and its imagery similar to some of Tsustakawa’s other work such as his *obos*, ritually stacked rock structures, the “Radiation Series” of sumi and gansai paintings, 1969 –1970, and the sculptures made up of flat disks such as the 1981 hanging fountain for KING Broadcasting. Each of these represents the artist’s abstraction of organic forms.

George Tsutakawa was born in Seattle in 1910. As a child he lived in and received much of his pre-college education in Japan, from 1917 – 1927. He finished high school in Seattle and attended the University of Washington. Tsustakawa was interned during the early 1940s, and served in the U.S. forces after 1942. Upon returning to Seattle he enrolled at the University again, graduating and then entering the Art School faculty in 1947. He became a well known regional painter, sculptor and teacher by the mid-1950s, and went on to become internationally renowned for his fountains. He became a faculty member in 1945, and later a professor in the University of Washington’s Art School. He retired from teaching in 1980.

Tsutakawa executed over 60 commissions in metal between 1960 and 1969, including the “Fountain of Wisdom,” located at the Downtown Library in 1960. He designed many fountains for corporations, but more for municipalities, libraries, universities and schools, hospitals and parks. George Tsutakawa’s works are found throughout the Puget Sound region and the nation, and in Canada and Japan. He designed medals for the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair, and for the 1976 Spokane Exposition.

The gates for the Lake City Library were the first ones created by Tsutakawa. He created them after touring Europe where he was impressed by the many historic gates.

In the 1960s, in addition to the Lake City Library Gates Tsutakawa also produced metal fountains for the Lloyd Center in Portland (1961), the Northgate Shopping Mall (1962); Commerce Tower in Kansas City, and the Pacific First Federal Savings bank in Tacoma (1964), the University YMCA (1964), the Washington State Ferry Terminal at Pier 41 in Seattle (1966), the UW School of Business and Naramore Park in Seattle and the Hobart Research Center in Troy, Ohio (1967). In 1968 he created the East Cloister Garth Fountain at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

The gates at the Lake City Library remain in the collection of the Seattle Public Library. Their creation and installation, along with the public art in the city's other libraries, helped establish Seattle's 1% for Art Program and the extensive public art collection managed by the Seattle Art Commission.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

### **The Site**

The Lake City Library is located at the northwest corner of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast and Northeast 125<sup>th</sup> Street. The library property is within the boundaries of the Lake City Urban Village. Its immediate neighbors include multi-story apartments and commercial buildings.

The library is located near the southern edge of a rectangular site, along 125<sup>th</sup> Street. Red brick is used as a distinguishing sidewalk curb to identify the library property. The building's perimeter is set within 40' wide and 20' wide landscaped plantings on the south and east elevations respectively.

Originally there were two mature Silver Leaf Maple trees along the south which dated from the era of the Lake City School and predated the building's construction. (The trees were planted originally as a World War I memorial, and the community expressed considerable concern in 1992 when one of the trees fell and the other was removed because of safety issues.) Although these original trees no longer remain, there are mature 40' tall Red Oak trees along both sides of the block of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast in front of the library. 18+' planting beds are placed along the back or west side. The beds contain evergreen ground cover plants. Those on the south and east were graded down from the sidewalk curbs to reveal 1.75+' of the building's perimeter concrete foundations and the spring-line of arched openings in the brick walls.

The site is approximately 130' by 299' with an area of approximately 39,000 square feet. A 32-stall, 12,430 square foot, asphalt paved parking lot, landscaped also with Red Oaks, is located to the north. The library's service entry and loading dock, located at the northwest corner of the building, are accessed directly from the lot, while the pedestrian public entry to the building is on the east facade through a single half-round arched opening and walled courtyard.

The entry arch is protected by a pair of 9' by 12' iron gates, designed by artist George Tsutakawa. A fully-enclosed, brick and concrete paved courtyard serves as an exterior vestibule to the building entry. Another landscaped courtyard is located on the west side where it is accessible from both the

children's reading area and staff lounge. This courtyard is visible also through windows behind the main circulation desk.

### **The Plan, Structure, and Exterior Features**

The building is a single story with a combination of flat and sloped roofs. The roofs are held behind a raised parapet. Thus the horizontal mass is primarily composed of the 14.75' tall brick perimeter walls. The overall T-shaped building is 134' long by 91' wide, and contains 9,545 square feet. It includes a southern mass with a 66' by 91' footprint and a more narrow, 68' by 52' northern mass. A fully enclosed 15' by 43' courtyard is provided at the west side, and a 23' x 45' courtyard at the east. The eastern courtyard is part of the building's public entry.

The roof, set 15' above grade and 13' above the floor, includes two raised portions, characterized by their mansard forms. These sections are clad with dark-stained cedar shingles with a 5.5" exposure, a treatment consistent with the original roofing material. Roof-top mounted HVAC units are concealed within the northernmost mansard roof form. Six rectangular clerestory windows are placed along each face of the southern mansard roof, illuminating the 50' x 75' space below. The interior ceiling plan reflects the roof form with a grid of lighting panels set within the same area.

The building rests on a 4" concrete slab with exposed concrete foundation walls that project 1.75' above the surrounding grade on the primary east and south facades. The roof structure consists of welded steel trusses, set at 8.2' on center, that span up to 80' in width, topped by 4x6 wood decking.

The concrete foundation walls are expressed as a design element in the concrete and brick exterior walls. These are unusual brick bearing walls, made up by simultaneously laid-up interior and exterior brick walls, with the interior cavity then filled by reinforced concrete. The primacy of the brick walls is emphasized by the 5' radius treatment of the outer building corners, and the band of soldier courses that mark the first floor, the cap, and the arched window and entry door openings. The simple building sign, consisting of cast stone and bronze letters set on a cast concrete panel, is located in the southeast planting bed.

The south and east elevations are the primary facades. Primary facade walls are punctuated also by 13.5' half-round arched openings that spring directly from the floor line. One of these on the south facade, and three on the east provide for large, 13.5' by 5' tall window openings. A fourth and larger arched opening on the east facade serves as the main building entry. Clerestory and window glazing is typically clear, single paned glass; at windows it is set into black-colored aluminum frames. Each of the arched window frames is divided by tripartite vertical divisions.

There is an impression that the arched window openings were intended to provide punctured natural light to the reading room interior rather than views out from it, due to their limited number, unusual form, and placement at floor level. A strong sense of introversion results, because of the room's spatial proportions, with 10' floor-to-ceiling heights, and 5' arched window head heights. Additional natural light is provided by the clerestory windows above the reading room.

The main entry to the library is provided through bronze gates and the east courtyard. Within the main doors there is a vestibule with pairs of wood-framed glazed doors set into an aluminum

storefront frame with sidelights. This sequence naturally results in an inward-orientation; the library patron experiences a separation from the exterior public realm arriving within the serene interior.

The interior plan is open, with the circulation desk directly west of the entry, the staff and processing rooms to the northwest, stacks and reading areas to the south. Ceiling heights of 8' and 10' respectively help to differentiate the smaller entry and staff areas from the open, larger room which provides for public reading and stack areas.

Originally there were open interior spaces in front of the four large arched windows in the reading room, furnished with upholstered chairs and tables for reading. Because of expanded collections, metal book stacks have been placed perpendicular to the single south perimeter window, and one of the four east windows. The children's area to the west is separated by low bookcases, providing direct access to and views of the west courtyard.

The north facade, facing the parking lot, and the west facade, which faces the fenced west property line, are secondary. A staff entry off the northwest loading dock is through an arched opening which leads to a door and the processing/workroom. The staff core includes a separate book storage and processing space to the south of the circulation desk, and the staff lounge and the open processing room to the north of it. The lounge looks into the west courtyard. A small, semi-private, partially glazed office is provided for the librarian. Located between the circulation desk and reading room, and designed with partition walls but no ceiling, it provides very little visual or acoustic privacy for the librarian.

Service spaces include public restrooms, a janitor closet, and the telephone/electrical rooms in the northeast portion of the building. The mechanical units are all roof-top mounted and located within the northern roof enclosure. There is no public meeting room in the Lake City Library because of the nearby location of the Lake City Youth Center/Community Center, which contained a widely used meeting room for public, cultural and community functions.

The plan of the Lake City Library provided the library patron with specific and controlled views and interaction with the exterior environment. The entry passes through the east courtyard which was paved and provided with several cast stone planters and a single specimen tree within a brick curb. The west courtyard is an enclosed garden space surrounded by 14.75' tall brick walls. Though it was designed to be landscaped with native plants, presently it is rather barren with only a single small tree in an integrated planter. Several linear benches are placed below a roof overhang, facing west to the blank brick wall.

### **Interior Features**

The building's roof structure, consisting of 80' long trusses, resulted in a completely open space and flat ceilings. The reading room and stack area contains 6.5' tall, black metal perimeter stacks, and newer 7.5' tall, beige colored steel free-standing, linear stacks. These, and lower book and periodical stacks are set below the 10' ceiling, and by their placement define the adult reading area, computer tables and children's area.

The book shelving is made of painted steel. Original building finishes included the unpainted brick masonry perimeter walls, painted gypsum wallboard at walls, soffits and ceilings, and vinyl asbestos floor tiles.

Originally the library featured dark-stained oak wood casework and upholstered Modern-styled furniture finished in bright accent colors of yellow and orange. The original furnishings, including the card catalogue, were raised on thin central and perimeter legs, giving the resilient flooring a monolithic reflective appearance that complemented the white grid of ceiling fluorescent light fixtures. It is reported that the architect, John Morse, originally argued for carpeted floors, but area rugs were installed instead – a circular one below the catalogue drawers and rectangular ones in the Children’s Area and south Reading Room.

Ample artificial lighting is provided by fluorescent panels with plastic diffusers which were set into a strong geometric ceiling grid. The original lighting has been enhanced by linear fluorescent fixtures set at the sill level of the clerestory windows, and by lamping changes that were made in the 1980s. The ceiling grid is treated with stained wood trim and custom, translucent, pyramidal acrylic reflectors.

Doors throughout are dark stained oak, with flush and glazed types. The glass in the glazed doors is held within trimmed openings with radius corners, a detail that recalls the radius corners of the building form.

### **Changes to the Building**

Modifications to the Lake City Library have had little impact on the architectural design or the physical integrity of the building. According to permit records DCLU changes have included the following:

- electrical service and lighting changes, noted in a permit dated May 23, 1969
- general alterations of the plan, by SPL architect Ron Bills, Sept. 30, 1982
- seismic upgrading of book stacks, by structural engineer Gary Swenson, Sept. 27, 1982
- replacement of light fixtures, addition electrical outlets, replacement of plumbing fixtures and addition of a security system, April 17 and April 21, 1985
- replacement of the air conditioning system, Dec. 11, 1986
- replacement of wood cedar roofing, addition of copper flashing and roof-top mechanical units, and masonry cleaning, by architect Morse and Stafford, Sept. 6, 1984
- ADA tenant improvements including public restrooms, by Gleason Assoc. Architects, Jan. 1, 1994
- changes to door exit hardware, June 26, 1994
- roof replacement and drainage modifications and addition of roof insulation by Van Horne & Van Horne Architects, June 30, 1998

SPL records note a fireproof book drop was installed in the original book drop location in 1978. (Book drops throughout the SPL system were closed in 1976 due to vandalism.) TVs and cable

hookups were installed in 1979 along with installations in the West Seattle, Rainier Beach and Queen Anne Libraries.

Under the direction of architect Elaine Day LaTourelle, an interior remodel was completed by SPL in the mid-1990s. Public areas of the library were emptied, the vinyl flooring encapsulated and carpeted, and new shelving installed. Existing book stacks were rearranged, and computer networking was provided by new floor outlets and conduit in trenches below the concrete slab. Several of the original, pyramidal-shaped acrylic panels on the ceiling lights were replaced with flat units.

Comprehensive accessibility and ADA barrier-free improvements included changes to casework. Other incremental modifications of the interior have occurred, including changes to librarian and information desks. The original German-made card catalogue stands have been replaced by the library's computerized system. The original long, wood-paneled, curvilinear circulation desk has been retained.

*The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:*

**The site, the exterior of the building, and the interior of the building excluding movable furniture.**

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City Historic Preservation Officer

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