The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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

REPORT ON DESIGNATION LPB 272/05

Name and Address of Property: **Seattle Fire Station #6**
101 23rd Avenue South

Legal Description: Yesler's HL 1st Add, Block 31, Lots 5 & 6, and Vac St. Add

At the public meeting held on June 15, 2005, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of Seattle Fire Station #6 at 101 23rd Ave. S. 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, period, or of a method of construction

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

F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or city.

DESCRIPTION

The Site

Fire Station No. 6 is located at 101 - 23 Avenue South at the southwest corner of 23rd Avenue South and East Yesler Way, in the city's Central District. The site is approximately 115' wide by 180' deep, and encompasses 20,400 square feet (0.47 acres). The property slopes downward to the west with a total overall grade drops an estimated 16'. Development of this part of the Central District dates back to the 1880s and 1890s, and the current property is the site of an 1894 era firehouse, which housed horses and a horse-drawn engine. Another earlier station in the area served Chemical Company No. 3, which operated out of rented quarters at 24th Avenue South and South Jackson beginning in the late nineteenth century.

Station No. 6 is bordered by a busy four-lane arterial, East Yesler Way, which provides two-way traffic in two lanes and two parking lanes, and 23rd Avenue South, another four-lane arterial street. The neighborhood was an early streetcar suburb and historic maps and photos show streetcar tracks

running on both streets. Currently the site has a radius sidewalk along the east property line, which resulted from a 1931 street vacation process. The east sidewalk is 6' wide; the north sidewalk 12'.

The Station has set backs that emphasize its object-like siting. It is approximately 15.5' feet from the north property line, 48.5' from the south, 57.5' from the west, and 30+' from the west. A small, chain-link-fenced parking lot, which accommodates up to thirteen personnel vehicles, is located west of the building. It is accessed by a driveway off East Yesler Way.

Historic photos and drawings show various landscape treatments, including hedges along the streets. These were removed in the late 1980s. Presently there is a dense cluster of trees and evergreen shrubs along the south side that terminate in an overgrown area at the southeast corner, and Norway maple and honey locust street trees are placed along the East Yesler Way sidewalk. On the west there are zelkova trees, staghorn sumac, orchid rockrose and shore pine along the fence. A mound of evergreen native shrubs is placed in the lawn at the northeast corner.

The neighborhood that surrounds the station is made up by a mix of commercial, residential and public buildings. To the north, across East Yesler Way, there are four, two story, wood frame, Victorian style houses which have recently been rehabilitated as multiplex dwellings. Diagonally to the northeast, across both streets, stands the 1913-era Douglass-Truth Library (a designated city landmark). Across 23rd Avenue to the east, there is a two-story, wood frame 1971-era building, which is used by Catholic Community Services. To the south there are several four-story, wood frame, retirement and assisted living facilities. West of the back fence, the neighborhood is residential, made up by a mix of older and newer houses and low-scale multifamily buildings. Washington Middle School is located two blocks to the south, and Garfield High School four blocks north.

The Building Structure and Exterior Features

The original structure is composed of 10" thick exterior reinforced concrete walls extending from the partial daylight basement up to a steel framed flat concrete slab roof. The walls are smooth concrete, cast in place with strong geometric reveals creating lines up to the top of the parapet walls, which are cast as flat or pinked caps at the top. The decorative casting includes a chevron detail at the parapet, and a grid like infill section at a blind window on the back facade. The wall steps upward at center of the primary east facade, above the apparatus doors. This facade is further emphasized by the dramatic lighting-bolt grille, which is set into the transom above the doors, and by the extended verticality of the parapet.

The building is flat roofed and cubic in its massing, but a sense of kinetic energy is conveyed by the grille, and by the radiating lines in the concrete walls above the windows and at the top of the hose tower. The sense of movement is reflected also in the steel apparatus doors, and in casting of the corners of the stepped parapet.

In 1986 - 1987, a 1,210 square foot addition of approximately 22' by 55' was constructed at the south side of the building. Constructed of 8” thick concrete walls, the addition was formed and finished on the exterior to match the original building's dramatic wall texture and pattern. The roof system at the addition is 2x12 wood framing, with built-up roofing and rigid insulation. A similar insulated roof was installed over the original slab roofs at that time.

Originally, the building was comprised of three sections, with an emphatic center and back and side wing, which made up a rectangular footprint. The concrete slab roof over the 34'-4"x 28'-10" apparatus bays rises 5'-3" above other roofs. This allows for the provision of clerestory windows to bring light into the Apparatus Room. A 5'-8"x 5'-6" Hose Tower is located near the center of the building, where it projects approximately 9' above the higher roof.

A tall two-bay Apparatus Room occupies the southeast portion of the building with the one-story Watch Office (originally the Instrument Room) at the northeast corner. The original lower, L-shaped portion wraps around the Apparatus Room on the north and west, and contains the present day Beanery, dining area, service spaces and officer's quarters. The 1986 - 1987 addition, to the south of the Apparatus Room, contains an Officer's Room and Dormitory.

Window openings are rectangular with consistent sizes and sill and head heights. Original windows featured industrial steel sash with multi-line patterns. Station personnel note that the older windows leaked. In 1998, all of the windows were replaced with aluminum framed plate glass windows, etched to echo the original pattern of the multi-lite steel windows. The only remaining original windows are the lightning bolt transom windows over the two apparatus doors, and into the two interior windows between the Apparatus Room into the Watch Room and in the stair to the basement. Exterior window frames are of two sizes, approximately typically 5'-3" or 3'-3" in height, with widths of 3'-3" or 4'-8". The hose tower windows are an exception, with three 11" w. by 10'-3" h. windows. Window types include casements, hoppers and fixed units.

The principal east facade is almost perfectly symmetrical, with a distinctive stepped parapet above the centrally located apparatus bays. The two engine bay openings each have a pair of large steel doors, with a multi-paned window at the center of each door, below the patterned transom with zigzag lightning bolt grille. The metal lightning bolts emanate from a concrete pier, animated by a stepped form, which separates the openings and projects into the transom above.

The original apparatus doors were replaced by modern overhead doors at some time in the 1950s or 1960s according to photographs, and again in 1986 when the overhead doors were replaced with reproductions of the original steel doors. The current doors have automatic openers and piano-style hinges rather than the original strap hinges.

Between the doors and transoms, there is a recessed sign band with signs, noting "TRUCK CO NO 3" above the south door, and "ENGINE CO NO 6" above the north door. Centered above the transoms "FIRE STATION NO 6" is inscribed. A flagpole extends up from the center of the raised parapet. The wing on the northern end of the east elevation includes a center door to the Watch Office with a transom above and flanked by a pair of casement windows.

The addition of the new wing on the south side of the building was a bold step, but the design of its exterior walls and facade composition blends seamlessly with that of the original structure and emphasizes a strong symmetry of the building image. The south wing was well crafted with a similar treatment of the cast-in-place concrete.

Situated to the back of the engine bay, the small hose tower is discretely obscured from view. The parapet at the lower roof is level, while a repetitive pinking pattern is expressed on the parapet and stepped portions of the higher roofs of the Apparatus Bay and Hose Tower.

The north facade contains four large casement windows into what are currently the Watch Office and the dining area of the Beanery. The lower half of these windows are etched with clear "muntins" to provide privacy. Above and below the openings, the concrete is cast with diagonal lines, visually extending the verticality of the windows to the parapet and down to the lower floor level. This detail is similar at all windows. At the main floor, three narrower windows are placed rhythmically across the west half of the facade, aligned with similar windows below, with all six opening into the Handball Court. The raised Apparatus Bay is set back from the eastern façade; three fixed clerestory windows placed on the north and south sides of this bay. The tall narrow hose tower projects above the lower flat-roofed mass.

The south facade of the addition extends almost 22' from the original southern wall. Five large casement windows are provided, opening into the Dormitory. Vertically aligned above, but set back at the original south wall line there are three clerestory windows into the Apparatus Room. Two upper casement windows, which are aligned vertically with two lower windows, are provided at the west end of the original south facade, along with a single, wider window at the western corner. Steel ladder rungs are embedded in the wall provides access from the main floor to grade, as an original fire escape detail. The grade elevation drops away from east to west, exposing the lower level as a daylight basement with access doors on grade.

The west facade contains eleven similar sized windows with transoms. Those at the main floor are casements, while those at the Basement Exercise Room and Study are hopper units. At the north end, two large blind openings are treated with in a cast grid pattern similar to the patterns in window lites. Six windows above open into the Officers' Rooms, aligned with three similar windows below the outermost openings.

Two exterior doors lead into the lower Basement level, one to the Exercise Room and one into a Storage Room. These are similar in detail to the Watch Office door but without glazing. A transom with an intake vent is located between the doors, which replaced an original coal chute. At the south end, the wall steps back 16'-9" to the wall of the addition. Drawings for the upper floor show three windows into the Dormitory, although only the middle window was installed. The two flanking windows are blind openings, with a similar grid pattern to those on the north end of the facade. The lower level has openings below the two blind openings, with the southernmost an air intake at its lower half. Above, the back wall of the Apparatus Bay has two nearly square clerestory windows, one placed to each side of the Hose Tower.

The Plan and Interior Features

The interior of Station No. 6 has been modified to upgrade facilities, but it still reflects the essential efficiency of its original plan, which featured an single story L-shaped arrangement of crew quarters around the Apparatus Room. The Apparatus Room currently houses Engine 6 and Ladder 3, and occupies the southeast section of the original building. It adjoins the one-story Watch Office (originally called the Instrument Room) at the northeast corner. A stair at the northwest corner of the Apparatus Room provides access to the basement level.

The L-shaped crew quarters originally contained the Officer Quarters, the two-story Handball Court at the northwest corner, with Dormitory, Locker and Restrooms west of the Apparatus Room. The Watch Room was reduced to half its original size when the dining area and Beanery were relocated from the very small space at the Basement to encompass the original Officers' Rooms to the west of the Watch Office. The original Handball Court remains. The original Dormitory is presently partitioned into two Officers' Rooms.

The approximate 1,200 square foot addition to the south of the Apparatus Room contains the crew Dormitory, which is subdivided by high locker cabinets for privacy, and men's and women's restrooms, and a small desk at the end of the north-south corridor for computer use. This computer desk is separated from the Watch Office to minimize noise conflicts. Direct access is provided from the dormitory to the Apparatus Room.

The station's present Beanery / Kitchen is evidence of the firefighters' lengthy shifts, their home-like use of the building, and their culinary interests. It is an open room that features 36 painted wood lockers, with semi-circular cutouts serving as pulls; their shape recalls the Streamlined Modern style. There is a built-in stainless steel refrigerator and a secondary refrigerator, and a large stainless steel gas range. A semicircular stainless steel clad countertop extends on the east side of the gas range. Its curved form also reflects the Streamlined Moderne quality of the building. Three windows in the north wall provide natural illumination to the space. The ceiling is lowered in the kitchen section to accommodate ducting and ventilation; and this location is finished with gypsum wallboard. Acoustic ceiling tiles are used on the ceilings above the beams.

Only about half of the main floor footprint above is excavated. The lower level Basement contains the Exercise Room / Day Room and Study (formerly the Beanery), as well as the mechanical room and storage spaces. Decontamination functions occur outside the Basement and in the Laundry Room. Laundry functions have gradually changed as present day crewmembers bring in towels and bed linen or use sleeping bags.

Finishes within the station remain primarily simple and utilitarian, with concrete floors, and plaster coated hollow clay tile interior walls with an integral concrete base at original walls, and steel trim. Newer walls are wood framed painted gypsum wallboard, with rubber molded base. Restrooms have tile floors and wainscot, and other living spaces have linoleum flooring over concrete slab. The Handball Court floor is wood over sleepers on a concrete slab.

The building's mechanical, electrical, lighting, and communications systems and finishes have been upgraded. The building systems include heat pumps, which were installed in 1987. These are zoned and allow for air conditioning, an unusual feature in a Seattle fire station. According to station personnel, however, the cooling functions are limited. An exhaust system in the apparatus was added in 1999.

Documented Changes to the Building

The following changes to the building are indicated in historic photos or in DPD records, or have been observed at the building:

1931:	Construction of original building (George Stewart)
Unknown Date:	Locker and Storage Improvements
1986 - 1987:	Remodel of interior, Repair roof & windows, 1,210sf addition on south elevation, install HVAC (Cardwell/Thomas & Associates)
1988:	Landscape Improvements (Don Shimono Associates)
1998:	Window Replacement (Studio Jaso)
1999:	Exhaust System Upgrade (Architectural Interior Design Association)
2001:	Tenant improvements for new Watch Office (STFI / MUP permit)
2001:	Re-roof of #6 & #38 (Seattle Executive Services Dept.)

The 1986 - 1987 project was described in a 1983 study by architects from the Morse Stafford Partnership, which called for the building's renovation and modification, along with renovation of ten other stations and modifications to seven others for larger apparatus. This project anticipated that Fire Station No. 6 would house one pumper engine, one ladder truck, and staffing (typically by seven personnel at any one time).

The project budget was set in 1983 at $407,000, and it was intended to provide upgrading to meet the 1979 UBC, and an additional 40-year life to the station. The actual project, constructed by Wm. Parks Construction and completed in January 1987, cost $444,356. The design was recognized for its sensitivity to the original building and its architect, Cardwell Thomas, was given an AIA Design Award in 1987.

The project included the 21’-10” by 55’-1” addition on the south side for dormitory use, designed to match the exterior walls and detailing of the original building. The addition created a second side wing, and mirroring the north portion of primary east facade, and providing symmetry. The addition also contains a new Women’s Restroom/Shower Room, along with a new Men’s Restroom/Shower Room, and the horseshoe-shaped Dormitory with access to the Apparatus Room. The original Instrument Room and Officers’ Rooms at the northeast corner were reconfigured with a smaller Watch Office in the northeast corner, adjacent to the Apparatus Room, and the new Beanery and Kitchen constructed. The original Dormitory at the southwest corner of the building was subdivided into Officers’ Rooms, and the Locker Room west of the Apparatus Room was replaced with a Hall, Workbench, Restroom, and access to the Tarp Room.

Changes were made to basement spaces also. The original Boiler Room at the center of the lower level was replaced with a Laundry Room, and the furnace relocated to the original Fuel Room. The Storage Room in the south portion of the Basement was converted to an Exercise/Weight Room, and the original Kitchen was redesigned as a Study. Despite the changes to the form and interior layout, the integrity of the building remains intact.

The 1998 window replacement project addressed all exterior windows except the lighting bolt transom windows over the apparatus doors. The new larger glass panes were etched with muntin

patterns to mimic the original true divided light windows, with the lower halves of the ground level windows etched in the pane portions, rather than the muntin portions to provide privacy.

Public Art

At Fire Station No. 6 Spokane artists Tom Askman and Ellen Ziegler created illuminated "Lightning Bolts" by replacing an original design with blue anodized aluminum with indirect blue neo tube lighting in the transom windows above the apparatus bay doors. The piece recalls the original geometry of radiating lines, which were cast into the concrete facade. The artwork at Station No. 6 was coordinated with architects Nora Jaso and Rich Cardwell of Cardwell/Thomas & Associates.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historic Overview of the Seattle Fire Department

(Note: An overview of the Seattle Fire Department, up to the 1920s, is provided in the appendix to the landmark nominations of the eight fire stations. This nomination report for Station 6 includes an overview of the department in the early decades of the 20th century, and specific history of this and other fire stations in the Central Area and other nearby neighborhoods. Much of the information in this section is from Cathy Wickwire's "Survey Report: Comprehensive Inventory of City-Owned Historic Resources" of May 20, 2001.)

Once the Seattle Fire Department became well established in the city's downtown core, new stations were then opened to extend service to outlying areas. By the 1890s, new electric streetcar and cable car lines were bringing substantial real estate development to these and other previously inaccessible areas. On September 28, 1887, the Lake Washington Cable Railway inaugurated cable car service between Pioneer Square and Leschi Park with cars traveling east on Yesler Way and returning west on Jackson Street. The increased density in neighborhoods along Yesler Way resulted in the creation of the first fire department company outside of the downtown area in 1891 and the first permanent fire station in 1894. Chemical Company No. 3 operated out of rented quarters between May 19, 1891 and June 23, 1893 when it was replaced by Engine Company No. 6.

The new engine company continued to occupy the rented quarters at 24th Avenue South and South Jackson Street until August 13, 1894 when the Company began operating in its permanent station. Located at 23rd Avenue South and Yesler Way, the new station was also the first of nine fire stations that were built between 1894 and 1908 using a similar design. The simple Classic Box or Foursquare form was embellished with Colonial Revival stylistic features. (After being replaced by Engine Company No. 6 in June of 1893, Chemical Company No. 3 was moved to the first fire station on Queen Anne Hill.)

After the flurry of construction in the first half of the 1890s, only one new fire station was built in the next half decade. In March of 1896, Fire Station No. 9, a two-story wood frame building, opened on Capitol Hill on the corner of 15th Avenue East and East Republican Street. This building, the second to feature the Classic Box or Foursquare form, became known as Fire Station No. 7 when its engine company was renumbered in 1900. In 1909 Fire Station No. 28 opened in the Rainier Valley and was the first new fire station built in the recently annexed areas. For the next four years,

it remained the only fire station in all of the Rainier Valley until the 1914 construction of Fire Stations No. 30 in Mount Baker and No. 33 in Rainier Beach.

In the second decade of the 20th century, the Seattle Fire Department built twelve permanent stations and one temporary station, including five replacement stations. Half of the new stations were wood-frame structures while the other half were made of either brick or reinforced concrete. All five of the structures, which replaced earlier buildings, were of masonry construction. The Fire Department inaugurated service in Mount Baker, Wallingford, Rainier Beach, and Washington Park with the opening of new fire stations in these areas. These new stations helped fill in large geographic gaps in the service provided to the north, central and southeast areas of the city.

Between 1921 and 1930, ten new fire stations were completed, and all but two of them replaced earlier structures. Unlike most of the early masonry stations, only two of the new stations were made of brick while the rest were of reinforced concrete construction. By this time, two decades of growth had brought fire protection services to most areas of the city. However, many of the early fire stations were considered too small or too old to accommodate modern fire fighting equipment and motorized vehicles, which necessitated their remodel or replacement. This was especially the case after 1924 when the gradual phase out of all horse-drawn apparatus was complete, and the last of the Department's horses were retired.

During the 1930s, the Seattle Fire Department suffered the effects of the nationwide financial depression. Between April 1933 and January 1934, many stations were closed, and hundreds of firemen were laid off in a move by Mayor John F. Dore to economize due to the depression. Only two new permanent fire stations were completed in this decade.

In 1932, the new Art Deco Fire Station No. 6 was completed. It replaced an earlier wood frame structure on the same site in the Central Area. Two years later, Magnolia received its first fire station, No. 41, more than forty years after the area had been annexed in 1891. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), a depression-era federal relief agency, provided the drawings for the distinctive Streamline Moderne design of Fire Station No. 41, which opened in November 1934. This ended more than three decades of growth for the department, which had resulted in the construction of over forty new stations.

Most of the new structures featured unique designs, which were in keeping with the architecture of the time and sympathetic to their respective neighborhoods. Coverage had been extended to nearly all areas of the city, however a number of older wood frame fire stations remained in service, which would soon require replacement. Until 1949, the combination of financial difficulties due to the economic depression of the 1930s and shortages of labor and materials brought on by the Second World War halted construction of any new fire stations for a fifteen-year period.

Between 1965 and 1975 the Seattle Fire Department replaced ten older fire stations with modern new facilities and added service in West Seattle. The Department also closed four older stations and transferred responsibility for their service areas to nearby stations. The City of Seattle eventually sold most of the former fire station buildings to private property owners but retained several of the former stations and converted them to new uses. (Fire Station No. 12, in the nearby Madrona neighborhood, has operated as the Sally Goldmark Branch of the Seattle Public Library since February 1973.)

During this period, the Fire Department also reduced its total personnel. In 1968 there were 227 on-duty personnel while presently the number totals 196. Some firefighters suggest that the changes in the 1970s reflected those in the 1930s, resulting in consolidation of services and decommissioning of stations. In the mid-1980s, the Department undertook a program of modernization and substantially remodeled many of their stations, treating the older historic structures with great sensitivity. More than one hundred years after its establishment, the Seattle Fire Department continues its mission to curtail loss of life and property by fire through inspection and certification of building safety systems, public education, regulation of hazardous material storage, and fire suppression.

Historic Development of the Central Area

The Central Area, also known as the Central District, has experienced constant change over the last 120 years. Unlike some neighborhoods in Seattle, such as Fremont or Ballard, it was not established as an autonomous town, nor were its origins part of a real estate development, such as the University District or Phinney. Rather the neighborhood is a product of its residents and its urban environment, both of which have continually changed throughout the years.

The Central Area is the part of the city generally defined as north of Interstate 90, east of Broadway, and south of Union Street. It extending east toward Lake Washington, and encompassing areas such as Leshi Ridge and Madison Valley. The Central Area, which was located immediately east of Seattle's initial town site in Pioneer Square, was included as part of the original city that incorporated in 1869Early development of this area centered on logging. Logs were skidded down Yesler Way (then Skid Road) to the Yesler sawmill. This activity left a large flat area, well suited for residential development. Although the city limits then extended from Elliot Bay on the west to the shores of Lake Washington on the east, little residential or commercial development occurred until the 1880s.

Hack service to the Central Area was initiated in 1884. On September 28, 1887, the Lake Washington Cable Railway, founded by L. H. Thompson and Fred Sander, inaugurated cable car service between Pioneer Square and Leschi Park. The company's cars traveled east on Yesler Way and returned west on Jackson Street. Development was closely linked to these transportation systems. The area rapidly grew to a middle class residential neighborhood, with its own churches, synagogues, hospitals, schools, fire stations, and public library. (Steinbrueck and Nyberg, "Inventory of Buildings & Urban Design Resources, The Central Area.")

By 1910 streetcars ran throughout the Central Area, increasing in number and frequency as the years progressed. In 1913, when the Henry L. Yesler Memorial Library was first constructed, the area surrounding it was relatively settled as a residential community, with a number of remaining vacant lots, and several churches. Houses continued to be built up through the 1920s, with development slackening, as it did throughout the city, during the Depression. During World War II, population in the Central Area increased as workers from the south and east migrated west to jobs in Seattle. These new residents were often accommodated by the subdivision of older houses into multi-family dwellings.

By the mid-1900s, arterial traffic through the neighborhood and to suburbs along Lake Washington, contributed to the area's fragmentation. This situation was further aggravated by the plans for the R.

H. Thompson freeway to run through the Central Area; these were terminated because of citizen opposition.

In the post war era, new outlying suburbs drew people away from the Central Area, leaving it an enclave of the working class, low-income families, and the elderly. Disinvestment in the form of redlining, housing blight, and general decay of the social and environmental condition followed. The 1950s and 1960s saw several attempts at planning and community efforts to improve living conditions in the neighborhood. In 1964, the Yesler/Atlantic Urban Renewal Project began removing substandard housing from the area in anticipation of its replacement with high-density government subsidized housing. Federal funds were removed, however, and consequently development slowed, leaving vacant lots and blocks interspersed throughout the area. In 1968, improvements to the social and economic conditions were initiated by the Model City's Program. However, these efforts did not focus on the physical environment.

Census demographics as early as the 1890s, indicate the Central District has been a traditional home to many racial and ethnic minorities. Numerous synagogues in the area attest to the large Jewish population, especially in the blocks surrounding the Temple de Hirsch at East Pike Street and 15th Avenue. By the 1900s, the Judkins Neighborhood had become predominately German and Italian. Between ca. 1916 to 1941, Japanese Americans and other Asian immigrants moved into the area, and by 1940, the Central Area held Seattle's most concentrated Russian population.

Early African American settlement in the area is attributed to William Gross (1835 – 1898), who, after serving with Commodore Perry in the Orient, came to Seattle in 1859 at the suggestion of Washington's territorial governor, to open a hotel. The hotel, called "Our House," was at the time the second largest in Seattle. An important landowner and a leader in the African American community, Gross acquired a large tract of land between 21st and 23rd Avenues, near Madison Street, in payment for a debt. He then moved his residence to this area. Several other early African American families, including the Collins family (at 27th Avenue and East Madison), also moved to this area, representing the origins of the African American community in the Central Area. By 1940 the African American community had substantially increased in number, concentrated with residences and businesses along 23rd Avenue between Yesler Way and East Roy Street. (Mumford, p. 90 - 116.)The internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans living in the Pacific Coast States during World War II coincided with a great demand for military-industrial workers, and the migration of many African Americans, from the East and South to Northern and West Coast cities, such as Seattle.

African American identity with the Central Area has played a prominent role in the community's history beginning in the 1970s. One result of this was the renaming of the nearby Henry L. Yesler Memorial library to the Douglass-Truth Library in 1975. In the 1980s and 1990s, a renaissance in the Central Area began, created by general economic prosperity, community efforts, and greater investment in housing and businesses in the area. City investments included the new Central Neighborhood Service Center at 23rd Avenue South and South Jackson Street in 1996.

The Central Area's environment is made up by its residential housing stock, community oriented and small business, public and non-profit and institutional facilities. The nearby Douglass-Truth Library, Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center, at 17th South and East Yesler, and original Firehouse No. 23/Cherry Hill Neighborhood Center, at 18th Avenue and East Columbia, are

examples of community-based development in the area. While some open spaces and vacant lots remain, the neighborhood's density has grown in the last several decades with the increase of infill housing and new commerce. Primarily single family, low scale apartments, and townhouse development characterize the residential blocks surrounding the fire station.

Present demographic studies suggest the Central Area is again undergoing a transformation. The area has become more diverse. Gentrification is suggested by the rise in median housing prices, which have increased in the past 15 years from $62,000 to $286,000. At the same time homeownership, and the number of children under high-school age have increased. (*The Seattle Times*, July 22, 2001.)

Nearby development in the immediate vicinity neighborhood of the fire station has focused on preservation actions. The four Victorian style homes at the northwest corner of 23rd Street South and Yesler Way, were rehabilitated by Historic Seattle in 2003, and the nearby Douglass-Truth Library was expanded with an addition this last year. Other development efforts are underway to encourage a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented urban village along Jackson Street. Nearby blocks, which have been zoned for increased commercial use, have resulted in urban commercial strips along 23rd Avenue, and greater residential density is planned for 22nd and 23rd Avenues, Yesler Way and Main Street.

The Central District is characterized by the presence of significant historic buildings in the neighborhood, including the library and community centers previously mentioned. The 1914 era Douglass Truth Library and 1912 era Langston Hughes Center, at 17th South and East Yesler, along with the following landmark properties:

- The 1953 Seventh Day Adventist Church, at 2400 East Spruce Street
- Three Victorian era residences, at the northwest corner of 23rd and East Yesler, which were rehabilitated by Historic Seattle in 2003
- A ca. 1902 large Neoclassic home at 2755 East Yesler Way
- The ca. 1910 Hertzel Synagogue /Odessa Brown Health Center, at 2017 East Spruce Street
- The 1902 Horace Mann Elementary School, at 2410 Cherry Street (designated a Seattle landmark)
- Garfield High School, which dates from 1924, at 23rd Avenue and East Alder Street
- Numerous ca. 1900 residences including those at 118 - 24th 106 - 20th and 123 - 21st Avenues

Each of these and the other aforementioned buildings was cited in a 1975 Urban Inventory of the Central Area led by Victor Steinbrueck and Folke Nyberg. Fire Station No. 6 was included in this survey, and cited as "significant to the city" as a potential historic landmark.

Construction of Station No. 6

Establishment of the cable car line on Yesler Way, along with other electric streetcar lines in the subsequent five years quickly brought substantial development to the neighborhoods along Yesler Way. This increased density resulted in the creation of the first fire department company to be located outside of the downtown area in 1891.

The first station on this site was one of nine fire stations built between 1894 and 1908 using a similar design, and was the first permanent home of the first company in the neighborhoods east of downtown. Chemical Company No. 3 operated out of rented quarters between May 19, 1891 and June 23, 1893 when it was first replaced by Engine Company No. 6. The engine company continued to occupy the rented quarters at 24th Avenue South and South Jackson Street until August 13, 1894 when their first permanent station was completed. This two-story wood frame building served Engine Company 6 until 1932, when a new station, designed by architect George Stewart, replaced the original 1894 building located on the same corner lot. The Art Deco and Moderne stylistic features of this fire station make it unique among all others in Seattle.

Current Conditions and Use

According to the Seattle Fire Department's web site, Station 6 presently houses one primary engine company (Engine 6) and ladder unit (Ladder 3). The vehicles include a 2002 American LaFrance 1500/500 (gallons per minute of water and psi tank capacity) pumper, and a 1992 Spartan/LTI, 106' Aerial truck. This truck contrasts with the tillered rigs used by Ladder Companies 1, 4, 9 and 10, which feature articulated vehicles with drivers in the back and front, which are used for tight cornering.

In 2002 Station No. 6 dispatched approximately 3,700 units. Of these, an estimated 1,100 were in response to fire calls, while about 2,400, or 65 to 70%, were in response to requests for emergency medical technician or paramedic assistance. Other dispatches including investigations, rescues, and fuel leaks or spills.

Station activities have shifted somewhat in the last decade. Voter registration, for example, was typical in all fire stations until the early 1990s. Station No. 6 still provides forms for self-registration, but these activities have been assumed by the nearby public library. With increased security concerns, all of the fire stations have become more inwardly focused. The crews continue to provide outreach, and all firefighters are EMT-trained. Other work performed from the station includes annual inspections of all commercial buildings within the district.

The Original Architect, George Stewart

George Stewart was born July 27, 1886, in Richmond, and attended the University of Minnesota where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Architecture in June 1922. He started as a draftsman in 1908, and worked in Ottawa; Winnipeg; Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; St. Paul, Minnesota; Idaho Falls and eventually in Seattle. In 1916 Stewart established an architect’s office under the name of Wyvill and Stewart in St. Paul, but closed it soon afterwards to enlist in the Army during World War I.

In Seattle he worked for several architectural firms, including Schack and Myers, and Huntington & Torbitt (sometime from 1927 and 1928). Stewart's employment with Schack and Myers occurred in a brief the period of 1917 - 1920, when James Schack and David Myers worked together prior to the formation of Schack Young and Myers in August 1920 with engineer Arrigo Young. The three partners worked together on city plan for Longview, Washington and the Hotel Monticello in that city, in 1922 - 1923, and on Seattle's Chamber of Commerce Building in 1924, and Seattle Civic Auditorium Complex in 1925. David Myers left the firm shortly in the mid-1920, and Schack and Young continued to work together until 1933. (Schack had had a brief partnership with Daniel R.

Huntington in 1907 - 1909, during which time he designed the First Methodist Church, and the first Arctic Club Building.) Stewart also worked for Seattle architect Frank L. Baker on "city work."

Stewart successfully passed the civil service exam November 5, 1929 for the position of Sr. Arch. Draftsman. He did not pass the architectural exam for the State of Washington, but asked for reconsideration in a letter dated December 22, 1930, which was approved. (Information in this biography is derived from Washington State Board of Registration records, various dates.)

Drawings from the City of Seattle Municipal Archives suggest that Stewart worked for the City's Building Department during the late 1920s and early 1930s. His name appears on a set of drawing sketches dated 1933, titled "Standard Two-Company Fire Station." The notes also identify "Station 13, 16, 38 and 39." Although Station 38 is a single-bay station, it is similar to No. 13 and 16. (Station No. 13 is at 3601 Beacon Avenue South on Beacon Hill, and No. 16 at 6846 Oswego Place Northeast, in the Green Lake neighborhood. Station No. 39 is a much later building in Lake City, and is not similar.)

Specific design drawings for Station No. 38 identify Stewart as the building's designer. His drawings for it and for the prototypical building shows Mission Revival references and a front facade, with arched parapets over the apparatus doors, which is similar to Stations 13 and 16. There are elements in George Stewart's designs for these buildings that are also similar to Daniel Huntington's Mission Revival Stations No. 14 and 27, and they may suggest some direct influence between Stewart and his former employer. Whether Huntington and Stewart worked together as colleagues during the period when Huntington served as City Architect is not known.

George Stewart designed Station No. 6 in 1932. His design for this unique Art Deco / Moderne building was unlike any other stations of its era. The design eliminated earlier historical references and featured an expressive stepped massing, zigzag pattern over the apparatus doors and fluted cast concrete perimeter walls.

Stewart was in his mid fifties when he designed Station No. 6. Additional information about the balance of his career has not been discovered. (The design of Station 6 has been attributed incorrectly in some standard references to B. Dudley Stuart, a well-known Seattle architect. The confusion over the attribution may have been due to the relative obscurity of George Stewart, a condition of his career that this landmark nomination may help address)

The Art Deco Style

Seattle Fire Stations, No. 6, 17, and No. 41, exemplify different aspects of Art Deco and Moderne styles that were popular in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Station No. 6 is recognized locally and nationally as a fine example of Art Deco architecture.

Art Deco and Moderne styles may be best understood in context with one another. These styles became popular throughout the United States during the pre-Depression and Depression era, and they share some influences but differ in history and formal aspects. Art Deco buildings are based on vertical orientation and feature stepped massing, and use of traditional as well as innovative modern materials, such as stone and terra cotta. They have richly treated surfaces, such as inlays, castings, polychrome glazes, etc. Many people identify Art Deco primarily as a style of ornament, with

motifs that include fluting and reeds, horizontal bands, chevrons or zigzags, and various frets that emphasize verticality. In contrast, Moderne emphasizes horizontal forms, simple shapes and rounded or curved surfaces. Moderne buildings appear often without ornament, except for the stringcourses and other horizontal trim devices. They feature flat roofs, pipe railings, round windows or corner window glazing, smooth finishes, and innovative materials such as glass block and aluminum. (Whiffen, p. 235 - 241)

Both Art Deco and Moderne were used for a relatively short period in fashion, product, machine, graphic and interior design, as well as in architectural design. In addition to buildings, there are many examples of Art Deco style hats and posters, and Moderne tableware and radios. In this sense theses styles are associated with innovative ideas about marketing and advertising that emerged in the 1920s, accompanied by new methods of mass production of consumer items.

Art Deco has clear references to contemporary aesthetic movements in Europe, such as French Cubism, Dutch de Stijl, and Italian Futurism. Sources note the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925, as bringing it worldwide attention. Art Deco buildings in Europe and America were typically high-style designs. With the onset of the Depression, luxury and elitism were viewed more critically. "At its best Art décor was a style consummately Parisian, 'smart' rather than pretty, (and) embraced … by the avant-garde … in America (it) enjoyed a short-lived vogue as superficially applied decoration … the major American designers of the Great Depression hated Deco … adjudging its romantic backsliding a betrayal and perversion of modernism. What they created, largely in reaction to Deco, was a new machine art: honest, simple and functionally expressive – (in) the house, the school, the streamlined train, the cigarette lighter, the toaster, the saucepan, or grand piano…" This new style became known as Moderne. (Grief, p. 13 - 16)

In contrast to the high style foreign origins of Art Deco, the Moderne style is considered to be an American invention, with its formal properties inspired by such disparate high and low cultural elements as jazz music, kinetic cinema, comic books, production line machinery, air flight, and other everyday life influences. In the architecture profession, the Chicago Tribune competition of 1922, and its second-place entry by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, was of influence, and may be seen as a transitional model from the Art Deco to the Moderne.

Art Deco buildings frequently utilized precious materials such as stone, and metal. With emerging discoveries and technical advancement, new building materials emerged during the Moderne period -- enameled steel paneling; Vitrolux, Thermolux, Thermopane and Vitrolite glass and glass tiles, and tempered and laminated glass and glass block. Aluminum, which began as a product produced in the Northwest, emerged as a material for decorative panels and later for window frames.

Several American cities are known for Art Deco architecture, including Tulsa, Los Angeles, and Miami. In contrast, the presence of Art Deco is limited in Seattle as it was introduced rather late to the city, just before the fall in development and construction brought by the Great Depression. The style was popular in commercial applications, such as retail stores and commercial offices, where it provided a fashionable, urbane identity. With the emergence of functionalism and economic changes during the run up to World War II, Art Deco fell from favor even in these settings.

Nationally known designers of Art Deco and Moderne buildings included Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond Loewy, Russell Wright, Lurelle Guild, Walter Dorwin Teague, and architect William Lescaux. In Seattle there were many design practitioners who had previously worked with revival and eclectic styles who produced Moderne buildings, including Floyd Naramore, J. Lester Holmes, R. C. Reamer, Carl Gould, and others. The following list includes other well-known Art Deco buildings in Seattle:

- Northern Life Tower, 1212 Third Avenue (A. H. Albertson, Joseph Wilson and Paul D. Richardson, 1928)
- Exchange Building, 821 Second Avenue (John Graham, Sr., 1929)
- The Bon Marche, Third Avenue and Pine Street (John Graham, Sr., 1929)
- The Baroness Apartment Building, 1005 Spring Street (Shack and Young, 1930)
- Harborview Hospital, 325 - 9th Avenue (Thomas, Grainger and Thomas, 1931)
- Seattle Times Headquarters Building, 1120 John Street at Fairview Avenue North (R. C. Reamer, 1931)
- Seattle (Asian) Art Museum, Volunteer Park (Bebb and Gould, 1932)
- The US Marine Hospital complex, including the staff residence buildings, on north Beacon Hill, currently part of Amazon.com headquarters and Pac-Med (Carl Gould, 1932)
- The US Federal Office Building, 911 First Avenue (US Dept. of the Treasury, 1932)
- The University of Washington's Penthouse Theater (Bebb and Gould and others, 1938)
- The Nakamura US Court House, 1010 - 5th Avenue (US Dept. of the Treasury, 1939, sometimes identified as an example of "Starved Classicism, another variant of Art Deco or Moderne style)

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There are multiple sources for drawings associated with the subject Fire Stations. Original construction drawings or full size copies for several of the stations are held at the City of Seattle's Fleets and Facilities Department. Most permit drawings for initial construction and later renovations are available from the Seattle Department of Planning and Design on microfiche, but many are of poor quality. The Seattle Municipal Archives also has some drawings from the Department of Administration Services' Facility Architectural Plans.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

- the exterior of the building, and
- the site

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