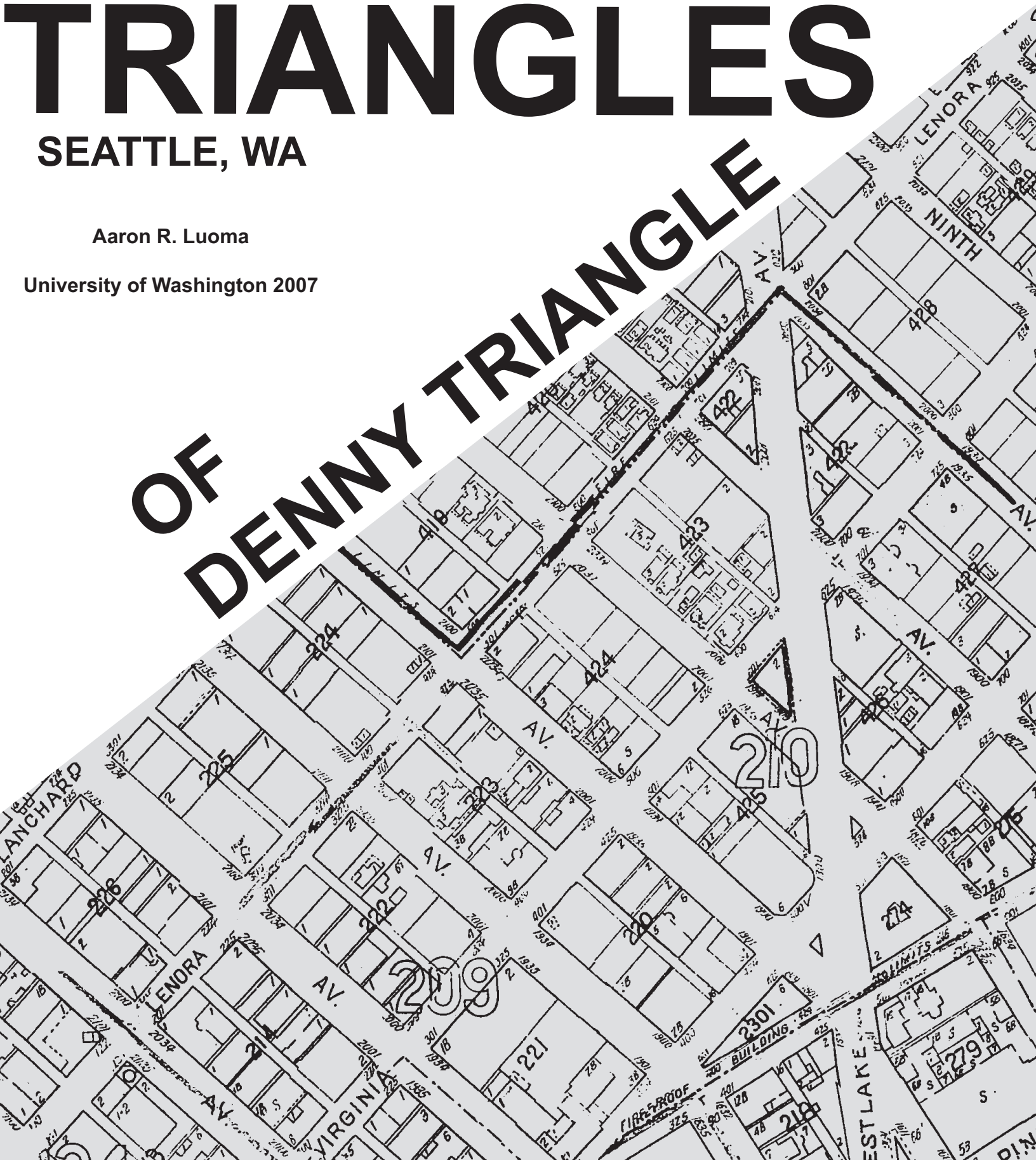
THE TRIANGLES

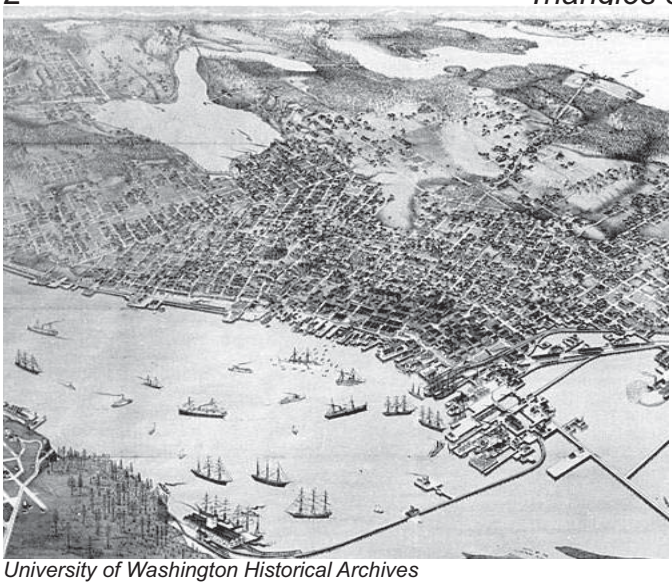
SEATTLE, WA

Aaron R. Luoma

University of Washington 2007

OF DENNY TRIANGLE





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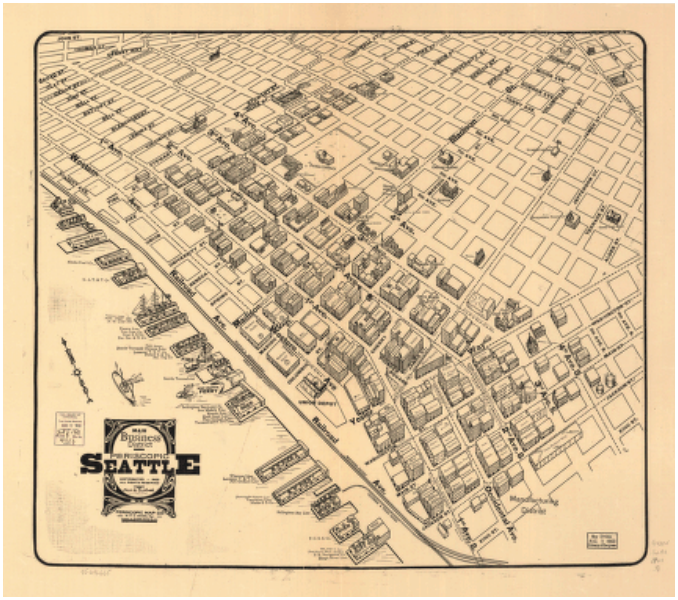
INTRODUCTION

The urban morphology of our cities is made of a complex, interweaving system of layers upon layers of history. Series of growth and decay mimic the natural environment, creating a rich matter of narration. These layers comprise a wealth of information about the cities past and the people that made the city. As time elapses our buildings may succumb to fire or demolition through growth and the changing of styles, but it is often our streets that largely remain intact. Though materials may change through time, the basic layout of streets tends to be preserved. They may begin with mere dirt roads, transition into cobble or brick, but eventually are paved with asphalt and concrete. While a building's footprint and materials are often totally lost, these layers that make up a street continue. Our streets have a way of preserving the past by the way they are oriented, sized and used. Overlooked and ignored by historians and academia, streets and their Rights-of-Way have a way of preserving a cities history that few buildings or historic districts ever could. Streets have been untouched largely because they are still used and are a crucial and necessary part of the urban infrastructure that makes any city successful. The establishment of street grids and their corresponding utilities form the transportation networks and arteries of a city. The massive amounts of funding and acquisition rights necessary to dramatically change our streets have acted as



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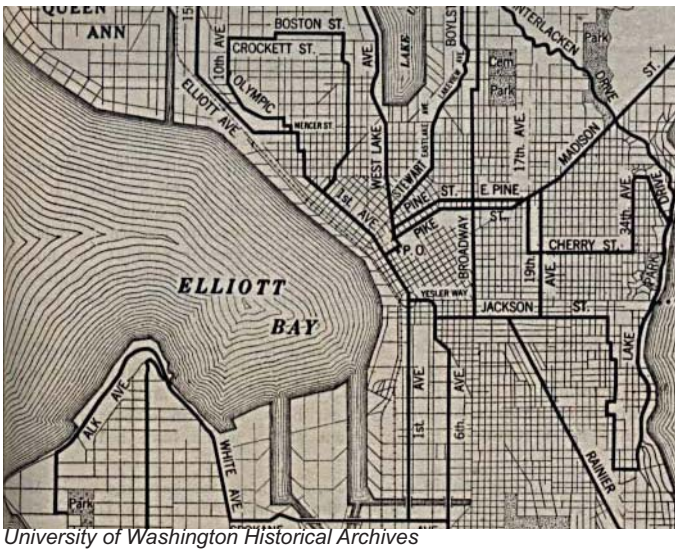
a preservation tool, but not often recognized as one. In the pursuit of economic growth, streets are excavated and laid creating spaces of various shapes and sizes.

The American love affair with the standard street grid has resulted in many of our cities being framed by large square lattices. Determined to make these straight, right-angled networks function regardless of the natural topography we have continually leveled our cities into flat planes of urbanity. Yet, fortunately, our technological intelligence has not progressed fast and far enough to completely grade away all our landforms. Some of our great American cities are recognized by these natural landforms, (e.g. Nob Hill in San Francisco and Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts).

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The city of Seattle, Washington is no different, with several hills and water bodies that enclose its greater downtown core. Beautiful and historical neighborhoods have developed on these surrounding hills such as Queen Anne Hill and Capital Hill. The early streets of Seattle were laid out in the typical grid well known to early settlers traveling from the larger most established cities along the east coast. Longer, more angular streets that did



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not adhere to the traditional grid were originally created for wealthier residents living away from the congested city, such as Madison Street. As early as the 1880's one gets a clear picture of the street framework of downtown Seattle. Many of the streets, including those in Pioneer Square area, are oriented so that the streets run perpendicular to the face of the bay. As the natural curve of Elliot Bay turns NW, the street grid is forced to turn a sharp angle to maintain this perpendicular orientation to the bay. It is at this sharp turn that the unique area known as Denny Triangle and its adjacent Belltown Neighborhood is formed. These neighborhoods are historically associated with the Denny Regrade. A series of massive engineering projects at beginning of the twentieth century leveled Denny Hill for more straight and level streets and other development. The current street of Denny Way (formerly Depot Way) forms the northern boundary of this angular street network. Stewart Street creates the SE border, while Elliot Bay acts as the SW border of the triangle. It is specifically in the urban neighborhood of Denny Triangle that a number of interesting spaces are created by the orientation and layout of these streets.

PROJECT AREA

The Denny Triangle area is named after Arthur Denny (1822-1899) and his family, one of the founding families of Seattle. The area is


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appropriately named for the obvious triangular shape it creates as a whole, but it also contains a number of other smaller triangular spaces because of the intersecting street grids. The neighborhood is approximately 143 acres with a total of 39 city blocks. These triangular spaces range in size from small city blocks, to small spaces no larger than a kitchen table. These triangles are formed on purpose, but are a result of the creation of streets bisecting plots of land. Often the triangles are created from two or more streets coming together, or by a single street cutting through standard square parcels, (e.g. Westlake street in the Denny Triangle). Much like the infamous Bermuda Triangle, these areas pose a number of problems for developers and city planners. The intersecting street grids can become traffic nightmares, and triangular parcels are often not as attractive for development because of the extra cost associated with designing buildings to accommodate the odd space. If the parcels are large enough, builders often simple build normal square and rectangular structures, leaving the rest for parking. There are also a number of smaller spaces that are not suitable for buildings or even parking. An aerial view of the Denny Triangle area in 1990 shows how much surface parking was a part of the urban landscape. Thus, these triangles are often ignored, and disregarded as wasted space. They are truly characterized as a genuine vernacular space, an every-day space. Few of the triangles were ever formally designed, but emerged as a convulsion of street development. Their placement and forms are derived from transportation engineer's attempts to provide spaces for pedestrians as they cross streets. Some of the spaces are so much a part of the street, that painted stripes are the only distinguishing mark of a different type of space, not for vehicular use.

PURPOSE

This research paper will examine these particular triangular spaces within the Denny Triangle. These triangles were formed by the morphology of the urban network of streets. The history of the Denny Triangle and its streets, in its relation to Seattle, adds an unconsidered layer of richness. The number of these spaces that occur in the Denny Triangle area gives an appropriate study area, with a broad range of spaces, with differing sizes, materials, histories, and current uses. The city of Seattle is one of the largest cities in America with the least amount of downtown open space. The neighborhood is currently under massive amounts of redevelopment, where buildings are being demolished and erected simultaneously. The triangle's histories that are located in the study area are encased in concrete, brick and asphalt. Unveiling these layers may reveal histories worth preserving and acknowledging. These spaces possess the real potential for renewed interest because of the feasibility of implementing new design ideas. Many of the spaces are owned by the city, and are contained within the existing ROW. The city of Seattle is constantly fighting for more open space, funding to maintain parks, partnering with private developments, but has largely overlooked the possibility of these triangles as a means to increase open space and the amenities they may provide to pedestrians. By looking at these layers that create these small triangular spaces one may give merit for the need to refocus the attention of professionals to these triangular spaces as usable urban open space. The Denny Triangle area and its triangles present a prototypical site, and the methodology of this paper could

be applied to the greater city of Seattle and other cities and their small triangles and open spaces.

METHODS & SOURCES

Since professional designers and academic disciplines largely ignore these vernacular spaces, most of the research methods conducted were original to the author. The large number of names for such spaces reveals the unsupported scholarship into the spaces. Some of these names include but not limited to: pedestrian islands, traffic islands, channels, channel islands, traffic triangles, safety island, crosswalk islands, crosswalk channels, walking medians, plazas, pocket parks, and lastly no parking zone. Though some studies have been conducted on small traffic circles in Seattle and other cities, traffic circles (or roundabouts) are spaces that are intentionally designed, placed, and often receive more attention from local residents in a more suburban environment. There were little amounts of studies as examples of how to approach analyzing the triangles and the potential uses.

On site field work and documentation remained a critical component in investigating the various triangles analyzed. Photos, measurements, and observations of use were performed, and form the groundwork for the analysis of each triangle. The author also happens to work daily near the Denny Triangle along Westlake Ave. The walking route to work from the author's bus stop, takes him along Westlake Avenue, starting from Stewart Street. Walking during the early morning and late evening commuting hours provided key informal observation times to view how people interacted with the spaces, as well as the author's own experiences.

The historical data retrieved for this study was primarily through sifting through hundreds of historical photos. Most of the triangles were never officially documented, and so searching for photos of the spaces was difficult. The street names and intersections provided a

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way to search for photos, and then to examine the photo for signs of the triangle space in the location it exists today. Since many of the streets in the study area, have remained in the same orientation and layout, historical photos were a valuable source of documenting the different histories, uses and layers that these spaces are comprised of. Recent construction along Westlake Ave. and on other streets also provided key opportunities to investigate the layers of the street, and construction crews excavated for utility repair and installation within in the ROW. However, the construction also posed some problems, as some triangles were virtually disappeared because of the work, creating some obvious problems, but also showing how quickly these spaces have changed in the past and the lack of value associated with them. The University of Washington and City of Seattle historical archives provided most of the photos used in this study. Historical Sanborn maps were also used to document the transformation of the streets in the Denny Triangle neighborhood. Some of the triangles were large enough for the Sanborn map surveyors to document, but many of the spaces were too small. Yet, they did provide an understanding of how development occurred in the area, and how the streets dictated much of this development after the Denny Regrade.

The Washington State Geospatial Data Archive

WAGDA

(WAGDA) was used to retrieve valuable GIS layers for existing conditions of the triangles and the spaces surrounding them. The ROW, zoning, parcel data, and park information was used. The parcel data and the parcel numbers were used to access King County's Assessor's office, so that land value, ownership and any other parcel information could be obtained. Many of the triangles were not actually parcels. If this was the case, land value was calculated by taking the average value per square foot of the parcels immediately adjacent to the triangle. In most cases, the assessor's information for the parcels that were triangles provided limited information on the past exchange and selling of the property.

ANALYSIS:

Within the study area, it is estimated that there are at least 50 legal parcels that are triangular in shape. A vast majority of these parcels have buildings on them, and some of the buildings are triangular in form as well. For the purposes of this study, triangle areas that don't have buildings on them were selected for further analysis, primarily for the intent to merit renewed interest as these spaces for future open space. Only two of the studied triangles were legal parcels, the reminder was within the ROW. A total of eleven triangles were looked at, selecting a broad range with various sizes, materials, histories and current uses. The following are a list of the eleven studied triangles and the names given for ease of referring to them for the rest of the paper. They are also grouped into larger categories of empty spaces, elevated pedestrian islands, and parcels, as a means for organization. The triangles in bold type will be described in detail, expanding upon their histories and possible futures. Westlake Square will be look at last, but is the prime example in demonstrating the purpose of this study. The triangles not in bold, will be used to add further analytical data for comparisons. However, they did not merit any in-depth research.

Empty spaces:

1. **Virginia & Westlake**
2. **Lenora & Westlake**
3. **Monorail**
4. Denny & 8th

Elevated pedestrian islands:

5. Adult Store X 2
6. Bus Plants
7. **Denny Plants**

Parcels (or attached to Parcel):

8. **Hummer**
9. **Bus Paved**
10. **Westlake Square**
11. 7th & Aurora

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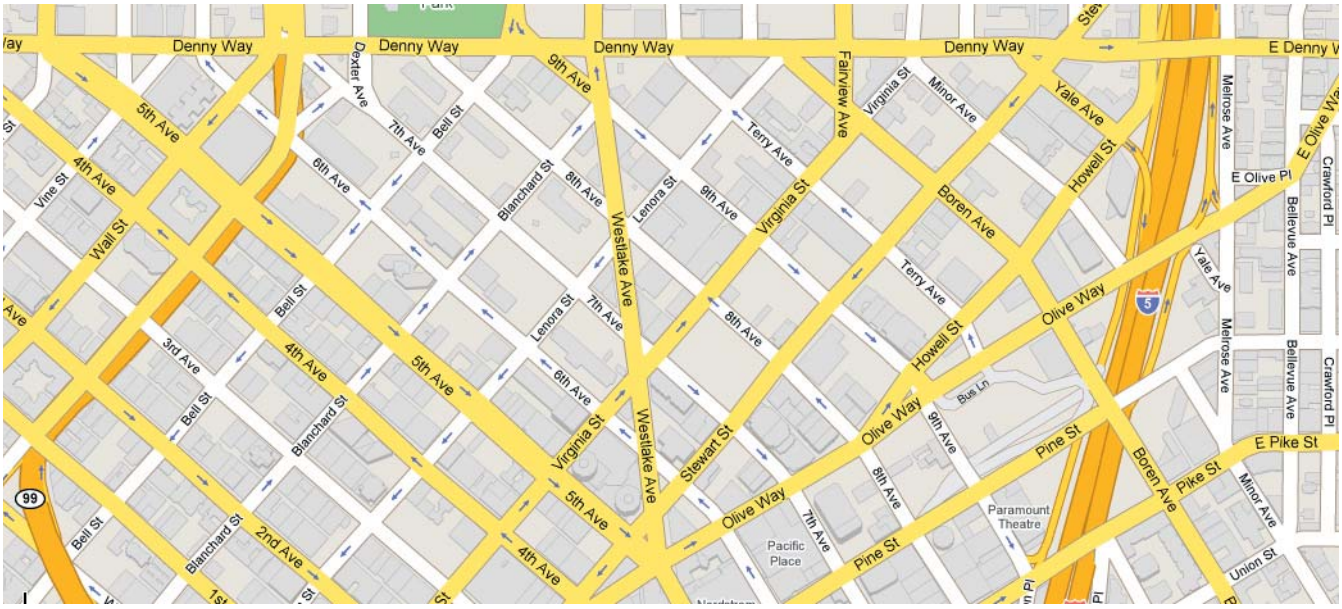
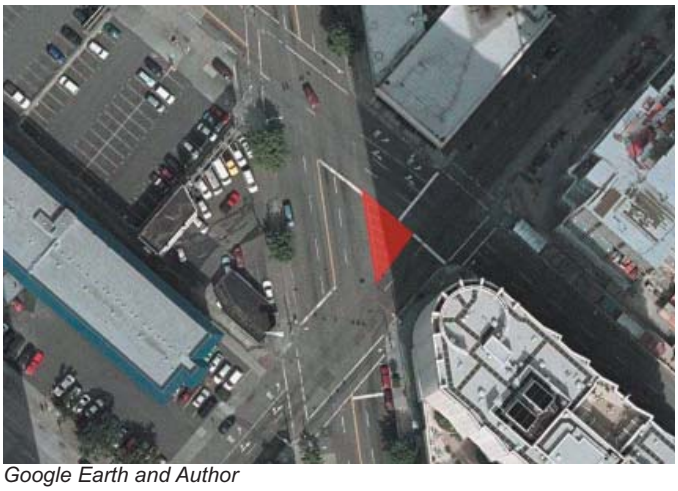


Google Maps



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VIRGINIA & WESTLAKE

Location: Virginia, Westlake and 7th Ave.
Perimeter: 140 feet
Area: 840 sq. feet
Materials: Asphalt paved with white stripes
Ownership: City of Seattle (SDOT)
Zoning: DOC2-300
Land Value: $289,800
Present Use: Construction Site

The history of this triangle space was difficult to trace. The major indicator to the original formation of this triangle space is revealed when Westlake was brought through the Denny Triangle area. The street was created for more of a direct access to downtown from the Lake Union, for coal and timber. Sanborn maps were used to trace the morphology of Westlake. The early map in 1888 shows no trace of Westlake. In 1905 we see the first increments of Westlake into the area. By 1916 the full length of Westlake runs through the area, created this small triangle. In 1905 a Stove manufacture was located near the corner of 7th and Virginia. A photo from 1911 shows Westlake and Virginia, notice the streetcar tracks running along Westlake and Virginia. In 1916, once the triangle was formed, Sanborn maps clearly indicate no activity within the triangle. Many auto-oriented shops were established around this intersection, and remained auto-oriented for much of the twentieth century. A photo

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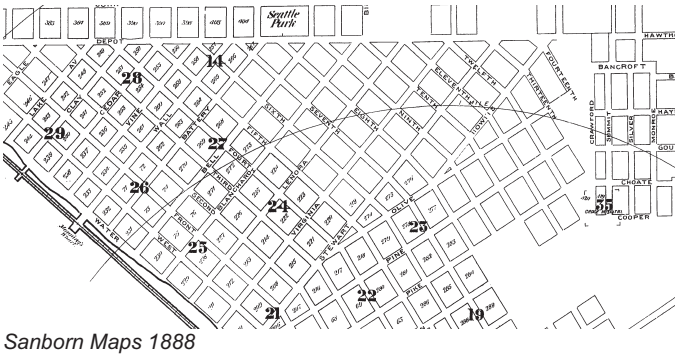
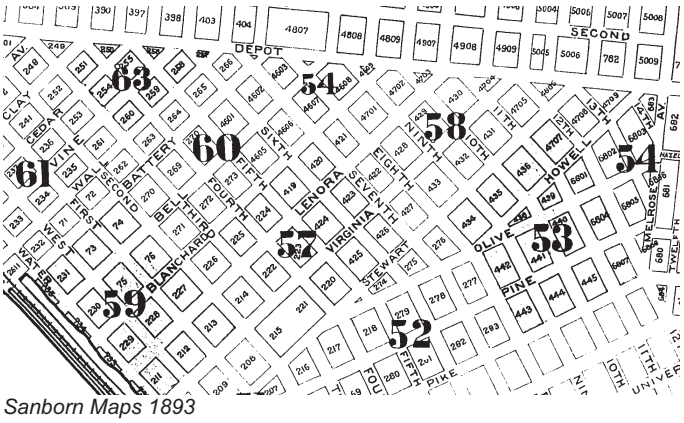
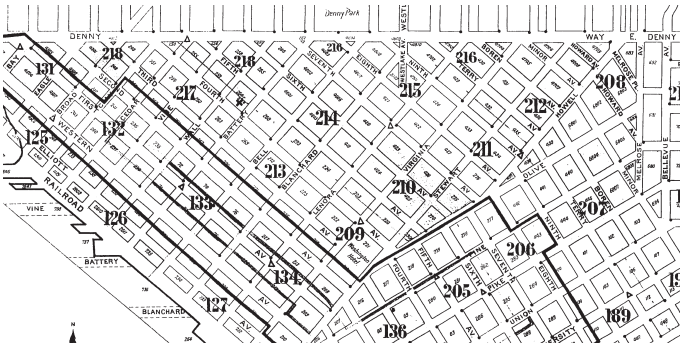
from 1954 shows the automobile businesses still prevalent. The following is a graphic representation, based upon the gathered information, of the morphology of the Virginia & Westlake triangle:



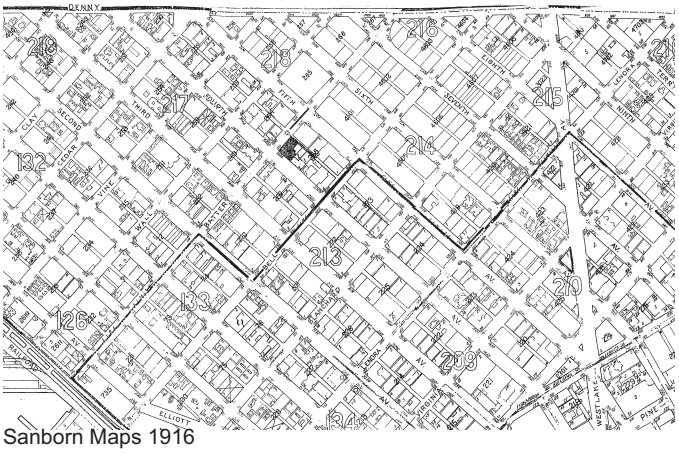
Sanborn Maps 1888



Sanborn Maps 1893



Sanborn Maps 1905



Sanborn Maps 1916

SOIL

PAVED BRICK

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PAVED WITH STRIPES CURRENT

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LENORA & WESTLAKE

Location: Lenora, Westlake and 8th Ave.
Perimeter: 131 feet
Area: 794 sq. feet
Materials: Asphalt paved
Ownership: City of Seattle (SDOT)
Zoning: DOC2-300 / DMC-240
Land Value: $186,590
Present Use: Empty

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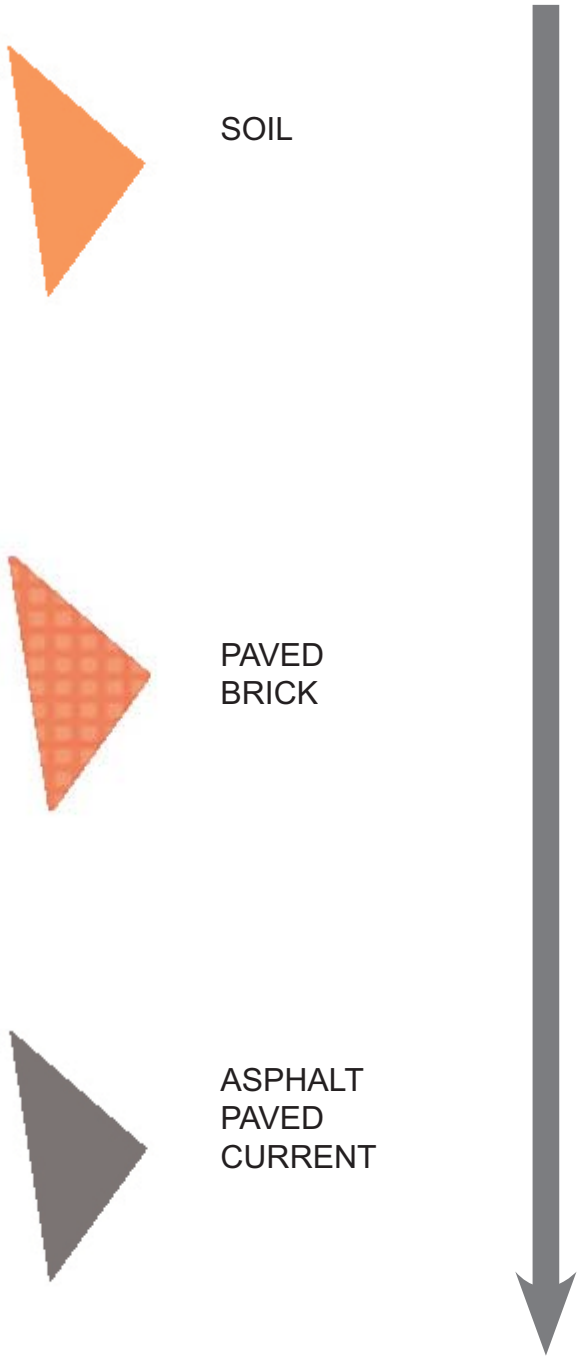
The history of this triangle remains quite similar to the previously discussed triangle to the south. The same morphology can be assumed based upon the creation of Westlake Avenue. A 1905 Sanborn map indicates a lumber mill on the corner of Lenora and 8th Avenue, just before Westlake cut through completely. After Westlake cut through in 1916, maps show a variety of business surrounding the triangle, but no clear distinction of the space itself. Some of these businesses include a hotel to the south, a rug company to the east, and auto repair shops to the west and north. One historical photo from 1950's shows the auto dealership (currently Enterprise). The following is a graphic representation of the morphology of the Lenora & Westlake triangle:



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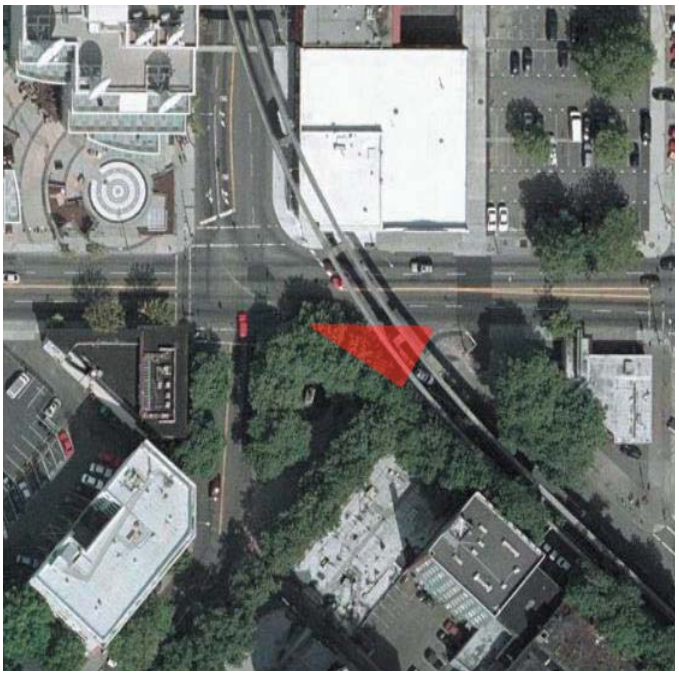

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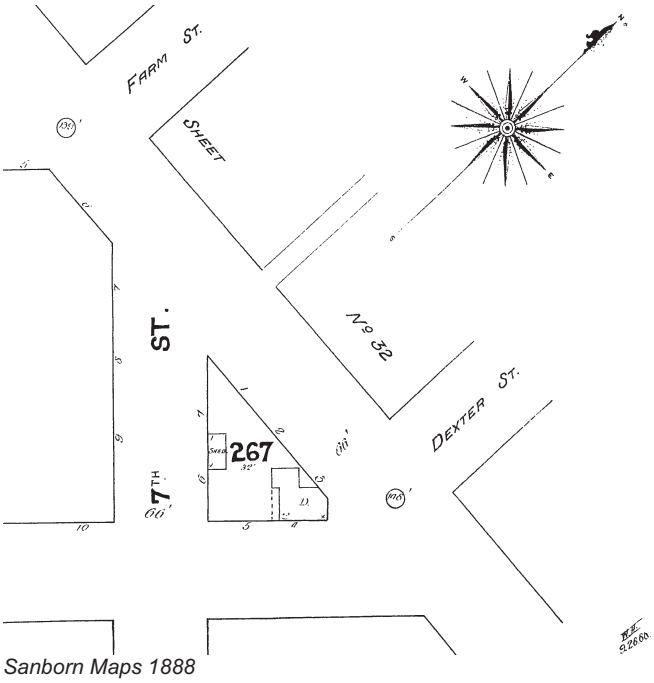
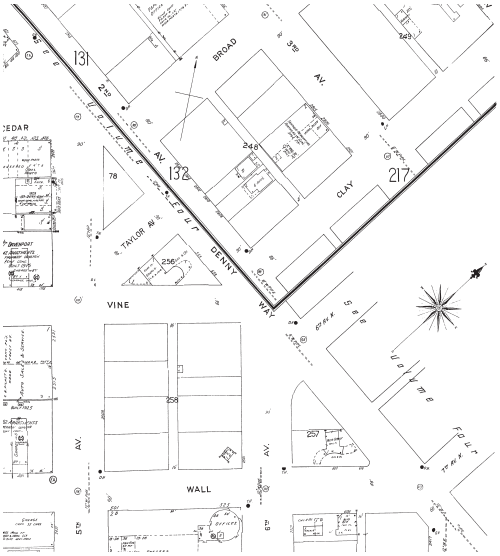
MONORAIL:

Location: Denny Way and 5th Ave.
Perimeter: 160 feet
Area: 897 sq. feet
Materials: Asphalt paved with white stripes
Ownership: City of Seattle (SDOT)
Zoning: DMR-125
Land Value: $283,452
Present Use: Empty, pedestrian island

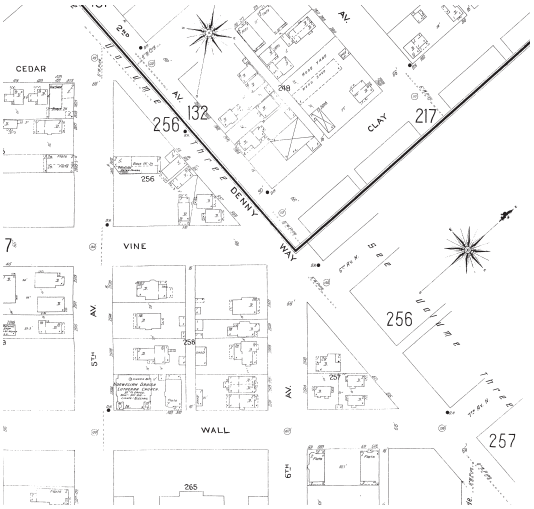
The history of this triangle is primarily dictated by the construction of the Monorail in 1962 for the World' Fair in Seattle. The earliest maps clearly show the formation of Depot Way (which was then renamed to Denny by 1905) and 5th Avenue. Sanborn maps also show the intersection of Depot and 5th. In 1888, only one small residential building is located near the triangle. By 1893, two small homes, more development across 5th Ave. and a Hay & Feed store at the opposite corner. In 1905, Sanborn maps show Taylor Ave. bisecting the triangle parcel, connecting 5th and Depot in a perpendicular manner. Apartments are shown across from 5th Ave. and no development is within the triangle. Much of the small triangles space can be associated with Tilikum Place, which the statue of Chief Seattle was dedicated on November 13th, 1912 (Founders Day). On April 19th, 1984 the statue was placed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The following is the graphic morphology of the triangle space, titled Monorail:



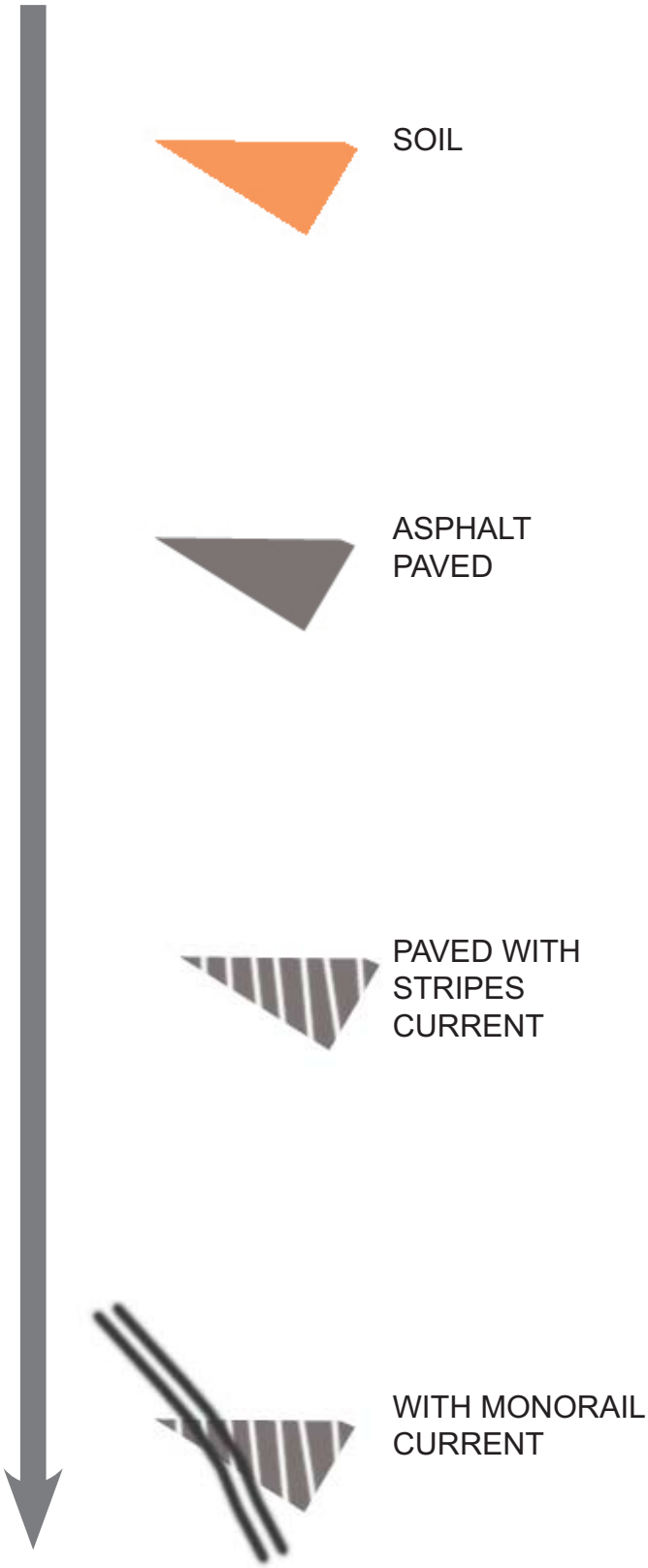
Sanborn Maps 1888



Sanborn Maps 1905



Sanborn Maps 1905



Author

Google Earth and author

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DENNY PLANTS

Location: Denny Way and Vine Street
Perimeter: 50 feet
Area: 100 sq. feet
Materials: Concrete raised, plants, suitcase
Ownership: City of Seattle (SDOT)
Zoning: DMC-160
Land Value: $14,850
Present Use: Pedestrian island, art installation

The present use of this island is perhaps its most interesting fact. In 2000, local public artist Buster Simpson created Portable Landscapes. These installations pieces took used suitcases and planted them with salvaged seed from the Skyway Luggage Seed Bank. Simpson chose this particular triangle for a single installation of an old suitcase, planted. The intention of Simpson is obviously oriented towards creating simple green spaces in ordinary, unused, vernacular spaces. The triangle is used as a break between crossing Vine Street as well as a vernacular podium for displaying the artwork. This history of this space is limited. The history is similar to the previous Monorail triangle. The streets of Denny and Vine can be seen in the earliest of maps of Seattle. Since the triangle is so small, no historical information was available for its construction or morphology. At some time, transportation engineers developed Vine Street to curve, so that northbound traffic on Vine could easily turn onto Denny. The recent history involving Buster Simpson's art installation is more important as illustrating a possible use of these spaces. An estimated graphic morphology is as follows:

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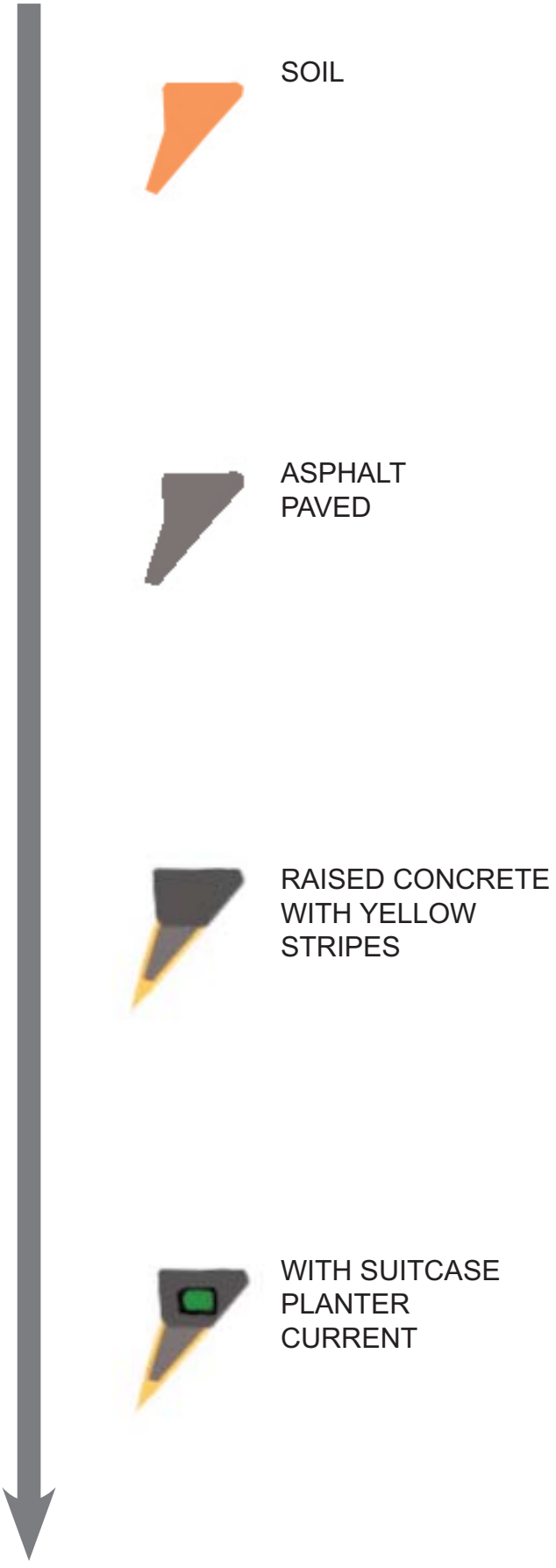

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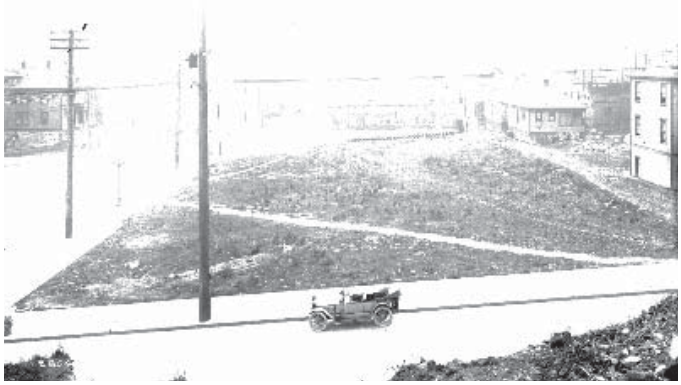
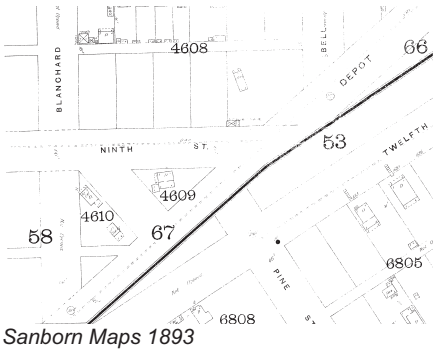


City of Seattle Historical Archives - Westlake & Denny 1915

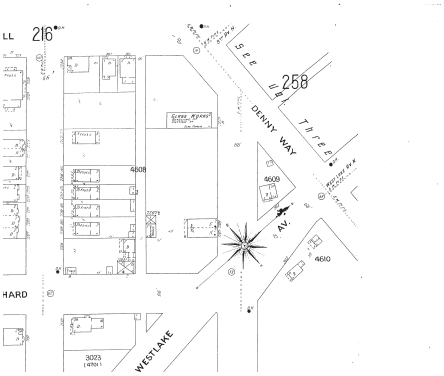
HUMMER:

Location: Denny Way, Westlake, 9th Ave.
Perimeter: 386 feet
Area: 3615 sq. feet
Materials: Concrete, lights, trailers
Ownership: Vulcan Inc.
Zoning: DMC-160
Land Value: $506,100
Present Use: Construction site

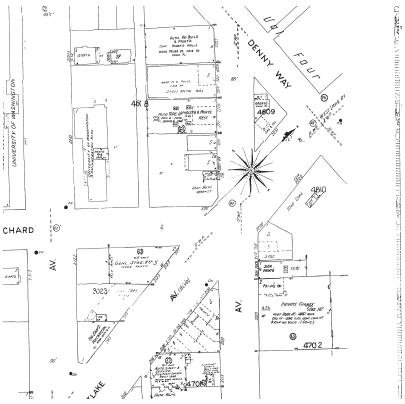
The history of this triangle begins with the very first formations of Westlake Ave. cutting through the Denny Triangle neighborhood. Early maps and Sanborn maps indicate early development on the triangle space, even before Westlake cut through the entire community. The first sign of Westlake is observed in a 1905 Sanborn map, with some structures located within the Hummer triangle. Maps from 1954 indicate a gas and oil venue on the triangle. Other surrounding uses through different time periods tended to be auto-oriented. The location of the triangle near the busy streets of Denny and Westlake provided good market visibility. In the more recent past, before the current construction, the triangle was used to display off road type vehicles. Large evergreen trees, shrubs, rock outcroppings with gravel. The intent was to show vehicles in more of an off road setting, with the cars driven up on top of the rocks. The morphology of this triangle and its proposed development are as follows:



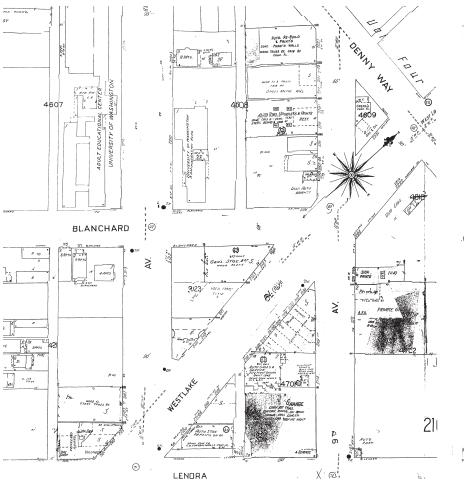
Sanborn Maps 1893



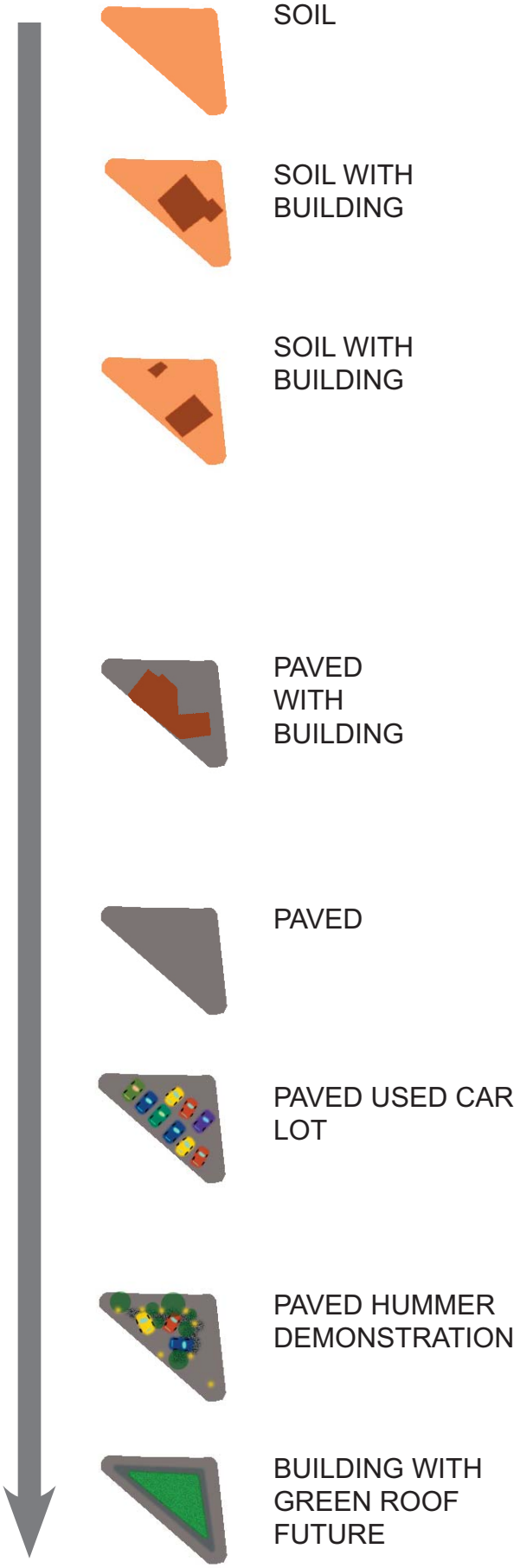
Sanborn Maps 1905



Sanborn Maps 1916



Sanborn Maps 1951



Author

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City of Seattle Historical archives - 8th & Olive 1932

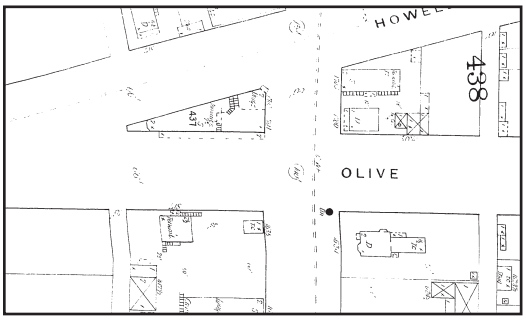
Author

Author

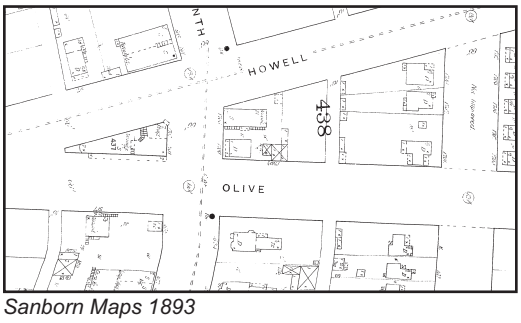
BUS PAVED

Location: Olive and Howell
Perimeter: 310 feet
Area: 2218 sq. feet
Materials: Scored concrete, planter, plants
Ownership: City of Seattle (SDOT)
Zoning: DOC-300
Land Value: $776,300
Present Use: Pedestrian island

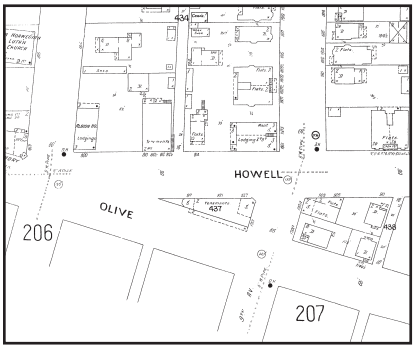
The intersection of Olive and Howell can be seen on a number of early historical maps, (figure 1.31). This small plot of land has a rich history of various land uses. In 1893 through 1905, Sanborn maps show that tenement housing existed on this small plot of land, (figure 1.32). A historical photo taken in 1932 shows a strange pedestrian island at the end of 8th Ave. and Olive. The small median has several bollards and larger posts with streetlights. Several people can be seen in the photo taking a rest or venturing beyond along the crosswalk, (figure 1.33). In 1951 a used car lot existed on the site, (figure 1.34). The current dental facility probably was constructed in the 1960's or 70's based upon the architecture. For a while, the triangle composed of two small islands, linked by small crosswalks into the larger triangle, (figure 1.35). Both Howell and Olive are one-way lanes that move to the northeast. A graphic representation of the morphology of the Bus Paved Triangle is as follows:



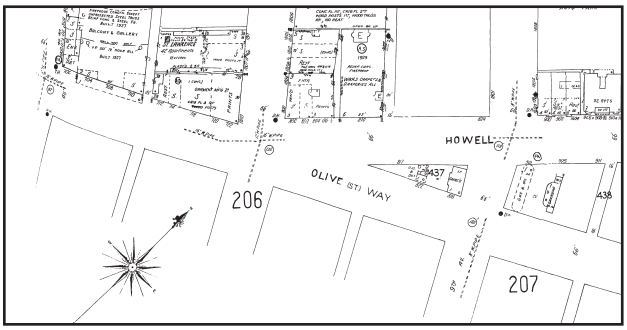
Sanborn Maps 1893



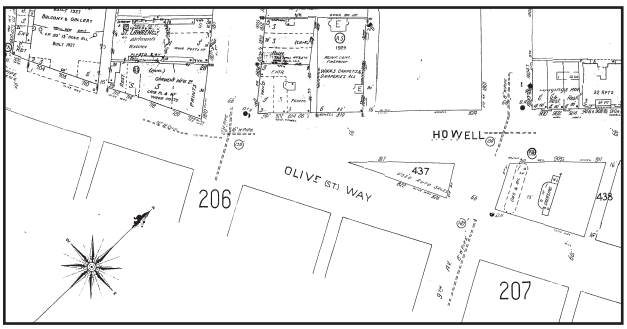
Sanborn Maps 1893



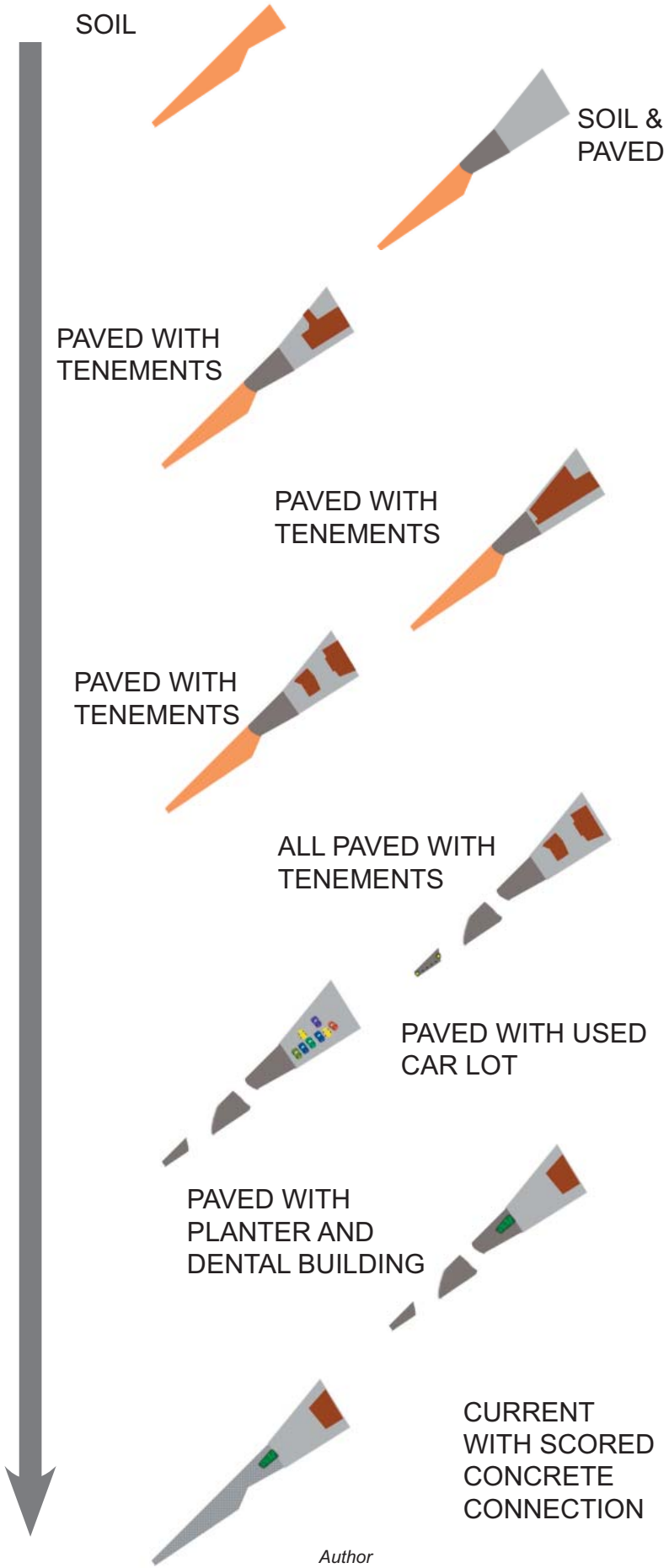
Sanborn Maps 1905



Sanborn Maps 1916



Sanborn Maps 1951



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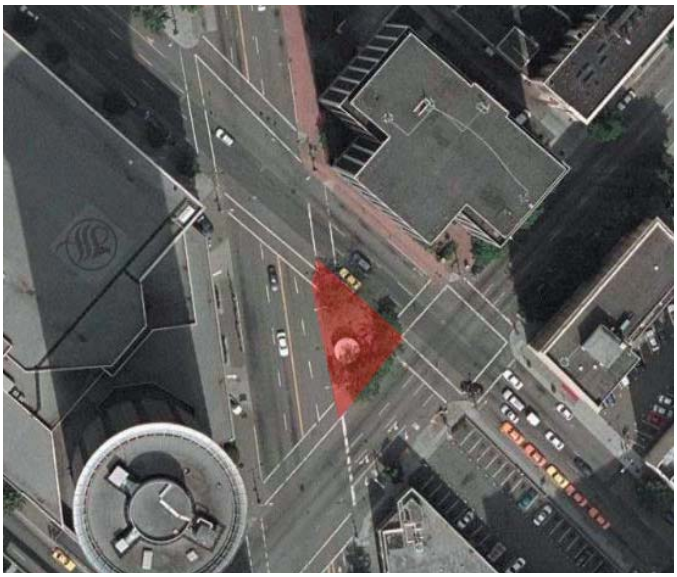

Google Earth and author

Author

Author

Author

WESTLAKE SQUARE

Location:	Westlake, Olive, and 6th Ave.
Perimeter:	233 feet
Area:	470 sq. feet
Materials:	Brick, copper, honeylocust trees, fountain
Ownership:	City of Seattle (Parks Department)
Zoning:	DOC-300
Land Value:	$70,500
Present Use:	Park

Though its present use could be characterized as a park, the space has slowly deteriorated over the years. The fountain is no longer maintained; the streetlights don't work and have been replaced by glaring safety lights. The small-enclosed spaces give homeless populations protected and sheltered spaces for lounging and sleeping. The space no longer serves its original intent, and has been forsaken by the general public as a failure as public open space. The space still serves as a pedestrian island for crossing 6th and Westlake. Bus stops not far away, office buildings, and small cafes near by create an

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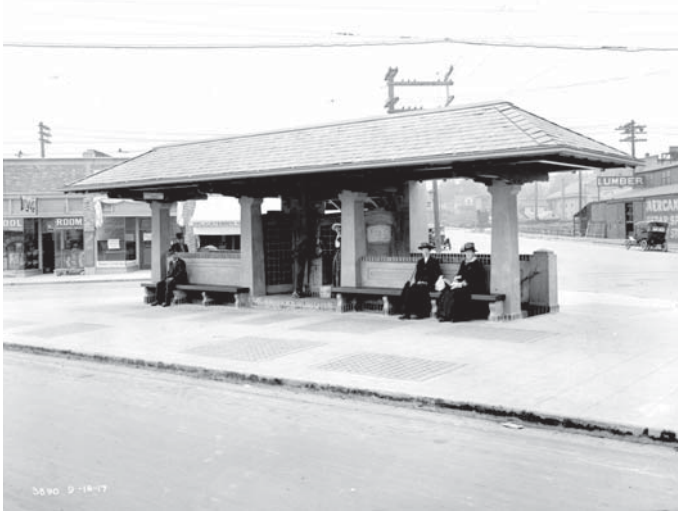
University of Washington Historical Archives - Westlake Square in background



University of Washington Historical Archives - 1918

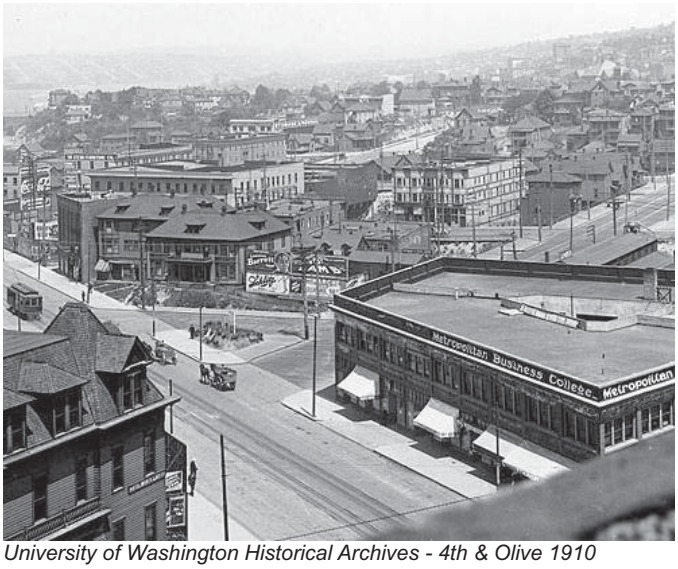
City of Seattle Historical Archives - Ladies Room

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Ladies Room

active area of pedestrian circulation at all hours of the day. Signs posted by the city disallowing different activities and the resultant graffiti reveals the spaces use and how the public perceives it.

There are two clear histories of Westlake Square; both are interesting and useful for in-depth discussion. The final cut through of Westlake Ave. sometime between 1905 and 1916 created this small triangular space. From Sanborn maps for 1916, the very first use of the space was a comfort station, (public restroom). Historical photos are numerous that document this underground restroom. The comfort station had seating available on top for a streetcar stop. On either side of the rectangular building there were stairs hat led to separate men and women's bathrooms. The surface also had a public drinking fountain in the middle of the shelter. These underground restrooms were lavishly flourished with various amenities. Based upon the photos and the other comfort stations, this one had polish marble stales, brass fixtures, oak chairs, white-tiled walls and terrazzo floors, lighting, benches, and a small concession stand was available. It's assumed that these concessions included toiletry items, cigars, and other material similar to a newsstand. The men's and women's room had a shoe shining station, and both rooms look like they used natural day lighting techniques. These open-air grates can be seen from one of the photos on the surface. Notice the women's side of the restroom correlates to where the women are sitting on the surface, as well as the single man to the left. The comfort stations look to have portable heaters, and closets for maintenance purposes. This comfort station

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Ladies Room



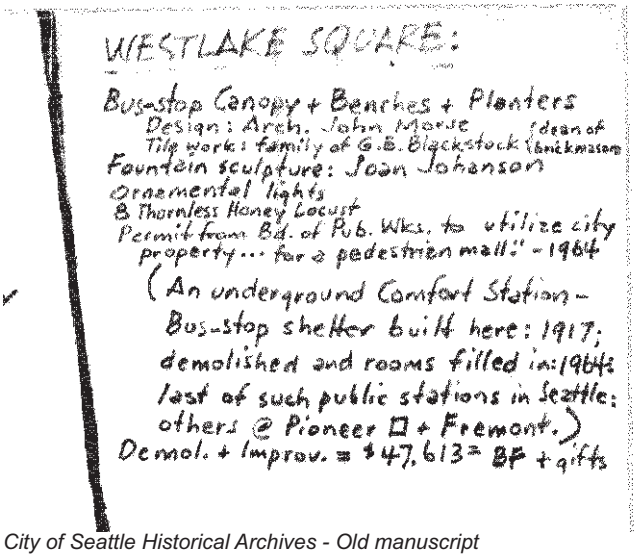
University of Washington Historical Archives - 4th & Olive 1910

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Mens Room

University of Washington Historical Archives - 5th & Westlake

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Mens Room

University of Washington Historical Archives


WESTLAKE SQUARE:

Bus-stop Canopy + Benches + Planters
Design: Arch. John Morse (dean of
Tile work: family of G.B. Blackstock (brickmason
Fountain sculpture: Joan Johanson
Ornamental lights
& Thornless Honey Locust
Permit from Bd. of Pub. Wks. to utilize city
property ... for a pedestrian mall." - 1964
(An underground Comfort Station -
Bus-stop shelter built here: 1917;
demolished and rooms filled in: 1964:
last of such public stations in Seattle:
others @ Pioneer □ + Fremont.)
Demol. + Improv. = $47,613 + gifts

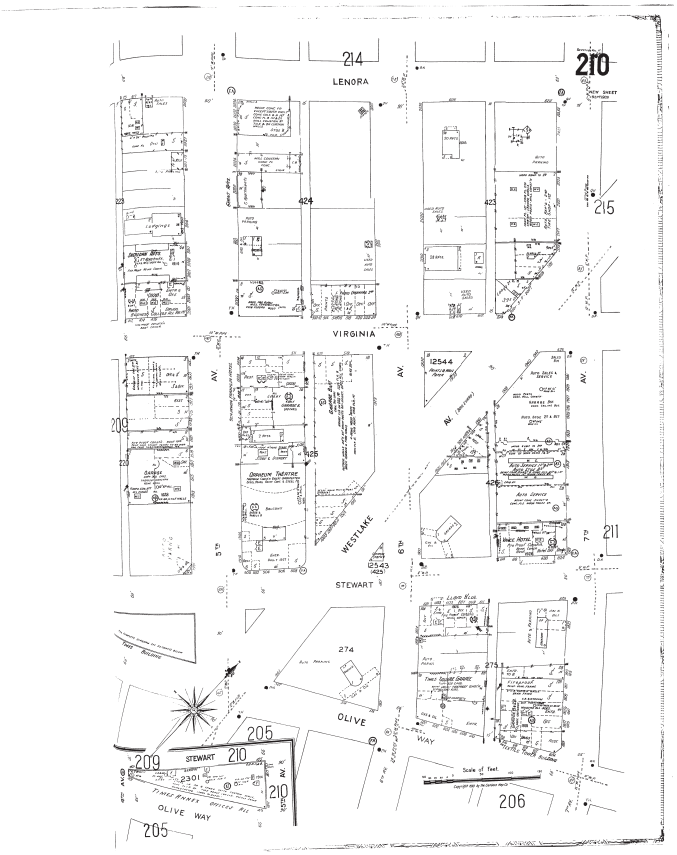
City of Seattle Historical Archives - Old manuscript

was probably the second station of its kind built in downtown Seattle. The only remaining one is in Pioneer Square, which opened up in September 23rd, 1909 to the general public. These extravagant restrooms were once believed to be the finest in the world. Much more research and documentation has been conducted on the restroom in Pioneer Square, but one can presume that many of the same features continued on, as the city realized their popularity. An article in the Pacific Builder and Engineer about the Pioneer Square station states,

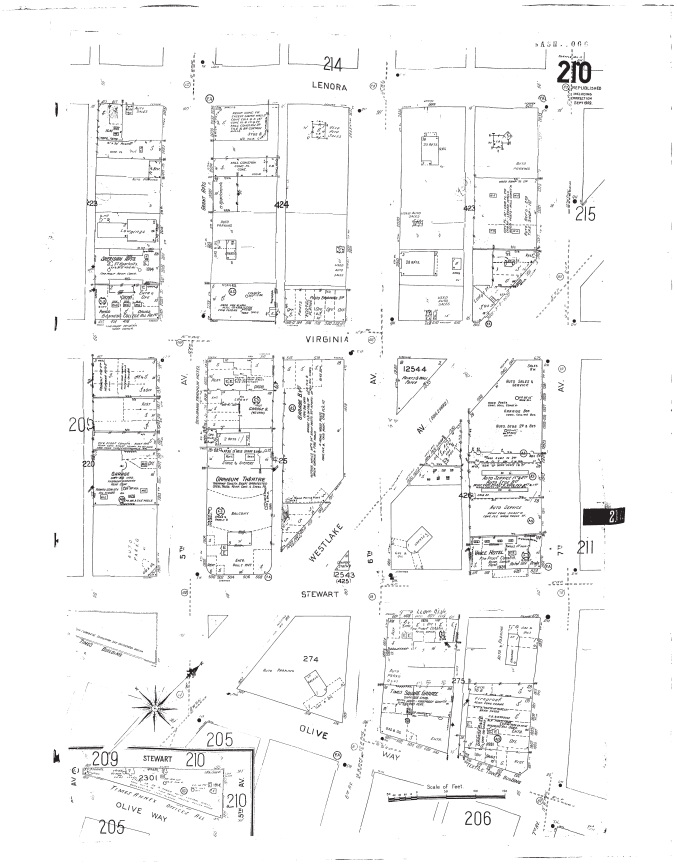
"The man of travels will find nowhere in the Eastern hemisphere a sub-surface public comfort station equal in character to that which has recently been completed in the downtown district of Seattle; and in the United States there are very few that will be found to equal it. ... Roland W. Cotterill, secretary of the Park Board, states that the comfort station has been one of Seattle's best advertisements. He has expressed himself as surprised at both the character and geographical distribution of the inquiries he has received about it."

The Pioneer Square station had free toilets and pay toilets. The pay toilets had special doors with separate keys in both the women and

Sanborn Maps 1905



Sanborn Maps 1916



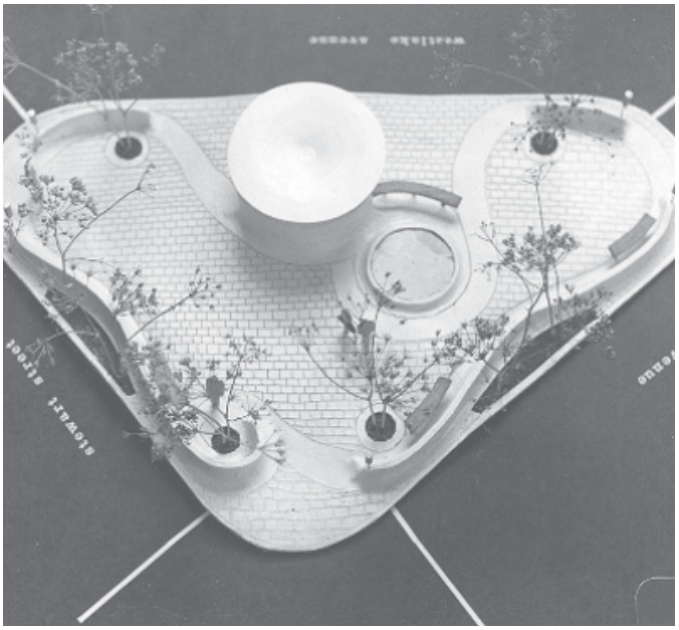
Sanborn Maps 1951

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Westlake & Olive 1938

men's sides. The Pioneer Square station has been able to be exposed to the general public today, through Seattle's Underground Tour. Yet, the history of the comfort station under Westlake Square is equally as important. A historical document shows that there also may have been one of these underground comfort stations in Fremont, but the author did not find any other information supporting such a claim.

The second major layer of history of Westlake Square is when the comfort station got filled in and paved over. The document (figure 1.52) states that the comfort station was filled and paved over for the creation of Westlake Square in 1964. An engraving into the brick at Westlake Square mentions it was possibly dedicated in 1965. The architect for Westlake Square was John Morse, who also designed the Lake City public library, which was landmark by the city of Seattle in 2001. The similar use of brick can be seen in both projects. Morse even won an AIA award for the library design in 1955; ironically few will probably remember Westlake Square. Morse's original model and photos show Westlake Square shortly after opening. The demolition and construction of the project totaled a mere $ 47,613.

City of Seattle Historical Archives - 5th, Westlake, and Olive 1959



City of Seattle Historical Archives - Architect's model 1969

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Architect's model 1969

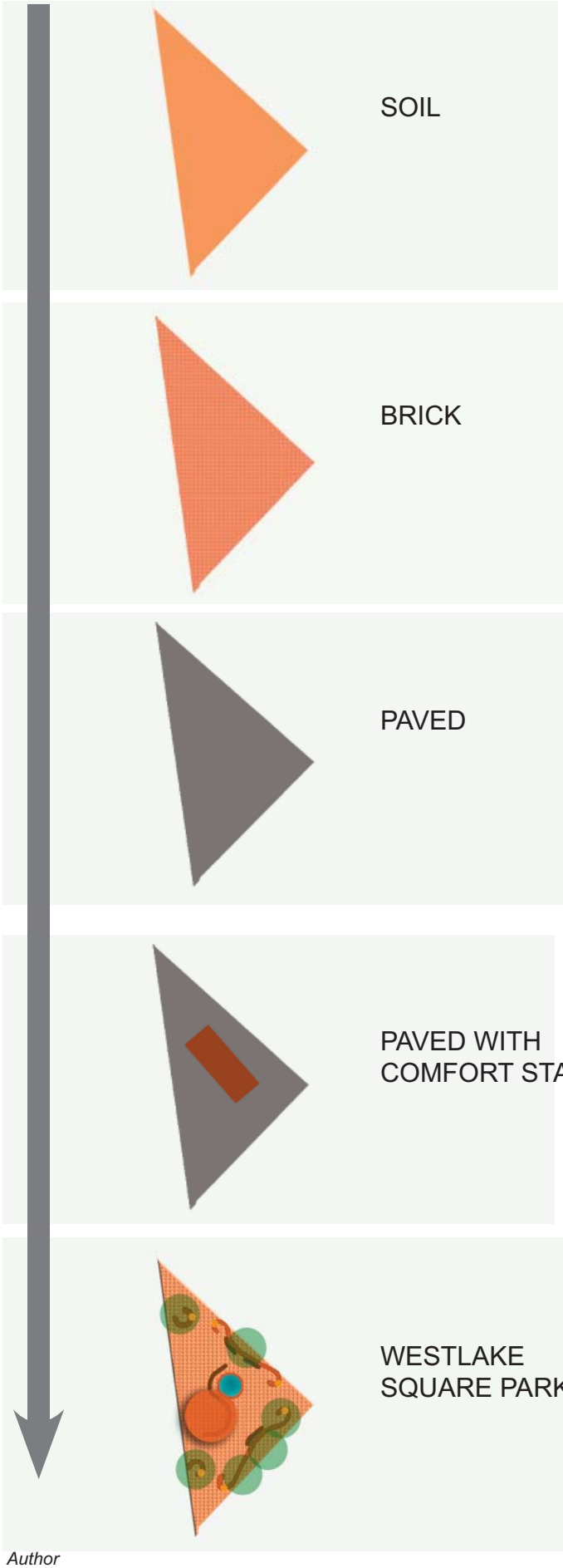
City of Seattle Historical Archives - Shortly after opening 1965

City of Seattle Historical Archives - Shortly after opening 1965

City of Seattle Historical Archives - right before demolition 1964

University Washington Historical Archives - Looking south along Westlake across 6th, 1964

City of Seattle Historical Archives - 1964 Westlake South, Westlake Square is the concrete triangle to the right



Author

Triangle	Location	Perimeter	Size (sq. feet)	Materials
Virginia & Westlake	Westlake / Virginia / 7th Ave.	139.42	840	Asphalt paved
Lenora & Westlake	Westlake / Lenora / 8th Ave.	130.92	794	Asphalt paved
Monorail Triangle	Denny / 5th Ave.	158.73	897	Asphalt paved
Denny & 8th	Denny / 8th Ave.	138.79	726	Asphalt paved
2 Adults Store	Westlake / Lenora / 7th Ave.	84.18	60	Concreted raised
Planted Bus Triangle	Howell / Olive / 9th Ave.	98.79	252	Plants, Concrete
Denny Plants	Denny / Vine	48.97	99	Concrete w/ suitcase & plants
Paved Bus Triangle	Howell / Olive	309.94	2218	Scored plaza, plants, rockwall
Hummer Triangle	Denny / Westlake / 9th Ave.	385.76	3615	Trees, shrubs, rocks, concrete, gravel
Westlake Square	Westlake / Stewart / 6th Ave	233	470	Brick, Bronze/Copper, Concrete
7th & Aurora	Denny / Aurora / 6th Ave.	255.51	2232	Concrete, asphalt, tree, dirt, grass

FUTURE

VIRGINIA & WESTLAKE:

The future of this space is questionable. The surface parking to the southeast is slated for demolition and a new high-rise condominium tower is to be built in the next couple of years. The South Lake Union street car will run north and south along Westlake, and is set for completion in early 2008. A stop on the north route will be just north of the triangle. Yet, one wonders as to the feasibility of this stops location, and the opportunity for this triangle space to become more of a pedestrian amenity and a stop for the streetcar. The increasing amounts of residential living, businesses will make this area livelier in the coming years.

LENORA & WESTLAKE:

The future of this small triangle has yet to be fully determined. The surface parking and adjacent building to the south was recently demolished (March 2007), paving the way for more development that includes spaces for small businesses and residential units. The increasing development of the Denny Triangle area, and the future streetcar along Westlake will continue to have a major impact on this space. One future implication for this space is that the city of Seattle has designated Lenora as an official green street. This possibly could

Author

open up doors for this small space to be more utilized for ecological and green principles, (Denny Triangle Neighborhood Green Street Guidelines).

MONORAIL:

The future of this space has a lot of possibilities and potential. The triangle's use as a pedestrian safety island could be enhanced to connect to Tilikum Place and Fisher Plaza, emphasizing the pedestrian scale environment. The future of the Monorail has gone through a series of fluctuations, and will play a part for the future of this space, as one of the pilings takes up a large area within the triangle. If the Monorail were to ever to torn down, the piling located near this triangle could possibly be preserved, in connection to the history of Tilikum Place and the Chief of Seattle statue.

Ownership	Zoning	Land Value	Present Use
City of Seattle ROW	DOC2-300	$289,800.00	Construction site
City of Seattle ROW	DOC2-300 / DMC-240	$186,590.00	Empty
City of Seattle ROW	DMR/R 125/65	$283,452.00	Pedestrian Island, Empty
City of Seattle ROW	DMC-160	$66,792.00	Empty
City of Seattle ROW	DOC2-300	$19,800.00	Construction, Pedestrian Island
City of Seattle ROW	DOC2-300	$88,200.00	Planted median
City of Seattle ROW	DMC-160	$14,850.00	Pedestrian Island
City of Seattle ROW	DOC2-300	$776,300.00	Plaza, Bus Stop
Vulcan Real Estate	DMC-160	$506,100.00	Construction site
City of Seattle Parks Dept.	DOC2-300	$70,500.00	Park
Clise Properties Inc.	DMC-160	$145,080.00	Vacant, homeless station

Author

The intersection of 5th Ave. and Denny will remain a gateway into Belltown, and begin to set the stage for the entrance into the Seattle Center. The development of this small triangle as a pedestrian space could be a wonderful addition to the established spaces all ready present.

DENNY PLANTS:

The future use of this space will be determined by how much of an impact the art installation made upon those who have seen it. The plants are temporary, and the suitcase won't last forever, though the seeds will continue to grow and die back each year. The pedestrian island will remain, but the plantings may have a lasting effect on the space.

HUMMER:

Once the development is completed, 9th Ave. will become a valet entrance for the complex, and not open to the public driving down Denny or Westlake. The road is to be paved with brick, with a streetcar stop going south down Westlake just south of the Hummer Triangle, attached to the main development. Plans call for the triangle to contain an architectural sophisticated glass building, with green roof, that will contain retail, (see figure 1.28). New street trees and other plantings are to be put along both Denny and Westlake. The triangle remains at the intersections of a lot of activity. New condominiums and other developments are planned for all four corners of Denny and Westlake intersection. The future use of the triangle for retail, and ecological purposes will greatly improve upon it existing and previous uses. The Hummer triangle is a good example of how a small urban space can be transformed through private development and the vacation of streets that bisect parcels.

BUS PAVED:

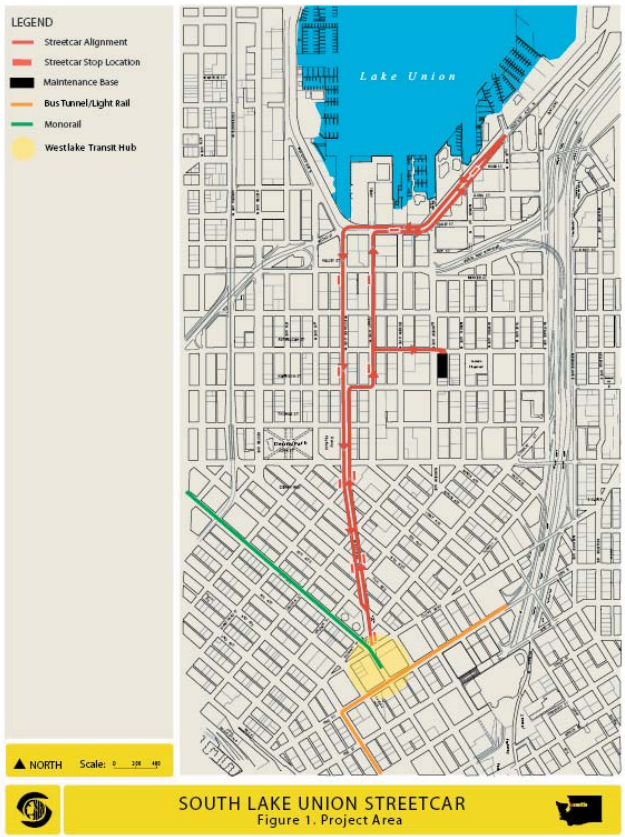
In the past year, this slender triangle has been repaved with concrete, reconnecting smaller islands into a larger space. The area is too small and skinny for any development, besides open urban space for pedestrians. It will remain a vital part of connecting commuters to the bus stop. The fate of the small dental building remains to be told. The space, though in a very good location and valuable, presents

Author

a very difficult set of constraints for building types. Parking and delivery service would be hard to incorporate into future planning. Thus, the existing public space and the dental parcel could potentially be incorporated into a larger public plaza. The bus shelter defines its use at the moment, along with the major transit center and entrance to the tunnel underneath Seattle just to the east.

WESTLAKE SQUARE:
Westlake Square use to be a part of the Adopt-a-Park program, were private businesses would help maintain these small parks. However, Westlake Square is no longer under this program and it has rapidly depleted state. No longer a world-class comfort station, or an award winning architects fanciful brick creation, Westlake Square is an eyesore to the citizens of Seattle. The South Lake Union Streetcar's tracks will soon run along side of the square. Local head of CityDesign of Seattle, (a sub department of the City's

City of Seattle - proposed South Lake Union Streetcar



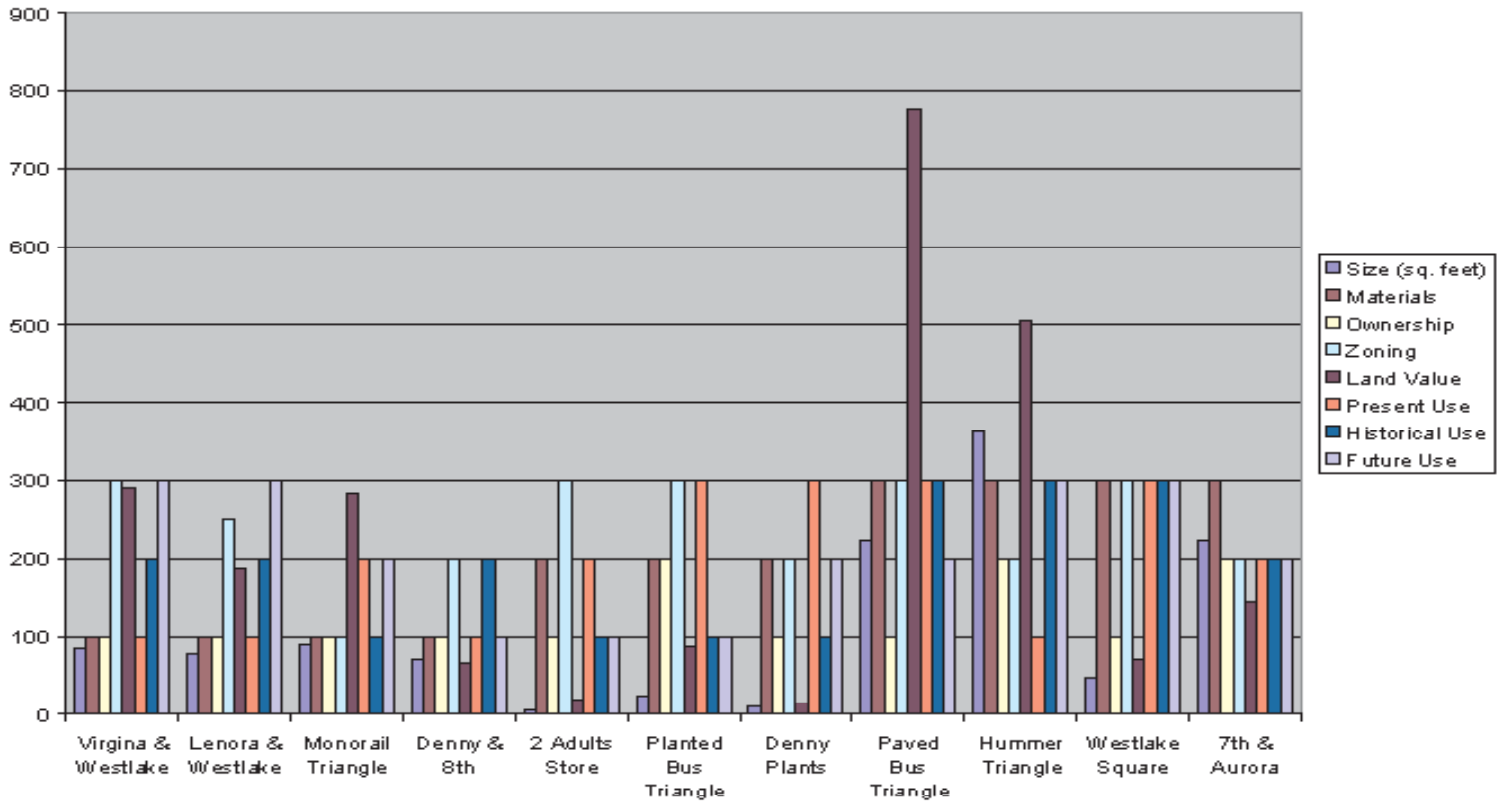
City of Seattle - proposed South Lake Union Streetcar route

Department of Planning and Development) Guillermo Romano has stated that the square will probably be demolished for a more suitable public open space alongside the streetcar. The future of Westlake Square as it stands now does not look promising. Everyday new holes are dug and lines painted for utility marking, (figure 1.59). The irony lies in the fact that the streetcar is returning after a hundred year absence, thus potential for a more functional designed urban space at Westlake Square is enormous.

SYNTHESIS

A total of seven triangles were analyzed in the Denny Triangle area. The graph above shows these triangles along with their analytical data. A series of comparison can be created to reveal different associations. Four other triangles were used in the analytical comparisons, to provide a wider range of comparisons. They were not analyzed further because of the lack of information regarding

Triangle	Materials	Ownership	Zoning	Present Use	Historical Use	Future Use
Virginia & Westlake	1	1	3	1	2	3
Lenora & Westlake	1	1	2.5	1	2	3
Monorail Triangle	1	1	1	2	1	2
Denny & 8th	1	1	2	1	2	1
2 Adults Store	2	1	3	2	1	1
Planted Bus Triangle	2	2	3	3	1	1
Denny Plants	2	1	2	3	1	2
Paved Bus Triangle	3	1	3	3	3	2
Hummer Triangle	3	2	2	1	3	3
Westlake Square	3	1	3	3	3	3
7th & Aurora	3	2	2	2	2	2

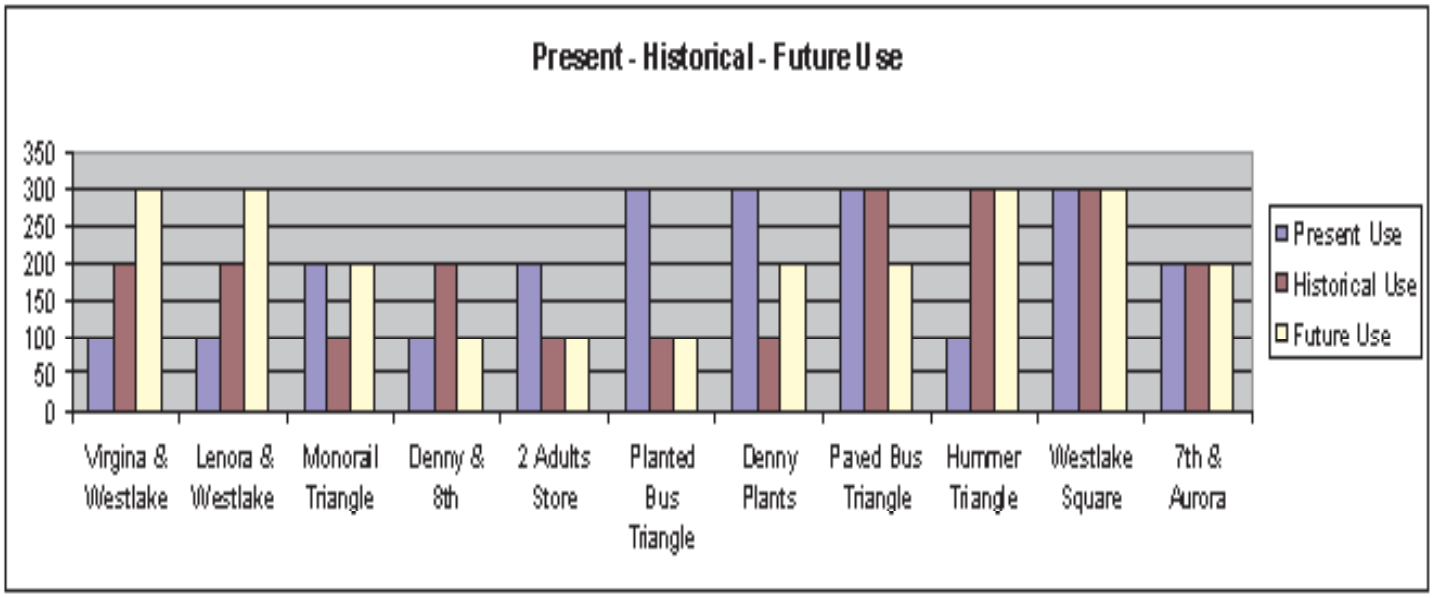


their present and historical uses. Where values were not present, quantitative data was assigned values for comparison. Materials were categorized 1 through 3, 1 being the least quality of material, (unusable for pedestrian, and public open space). Ownership was either 1 or 2, 1 was assigned if the city owned the property, 2 if they didn't. Zoning was categorized 1 through 3, 3 being the highest density. Present use was assigned values 1 through 3 for their value to the general public. Historical use was assigned numbers 1 through 3 based upon the significance the space played in history and the potential for preservation. Finally, future use was assigned values 1 through 3 based upon the potential for that space to feasibly contribute to the urban open space in Seattle. The following is a summarization of these quantified data:

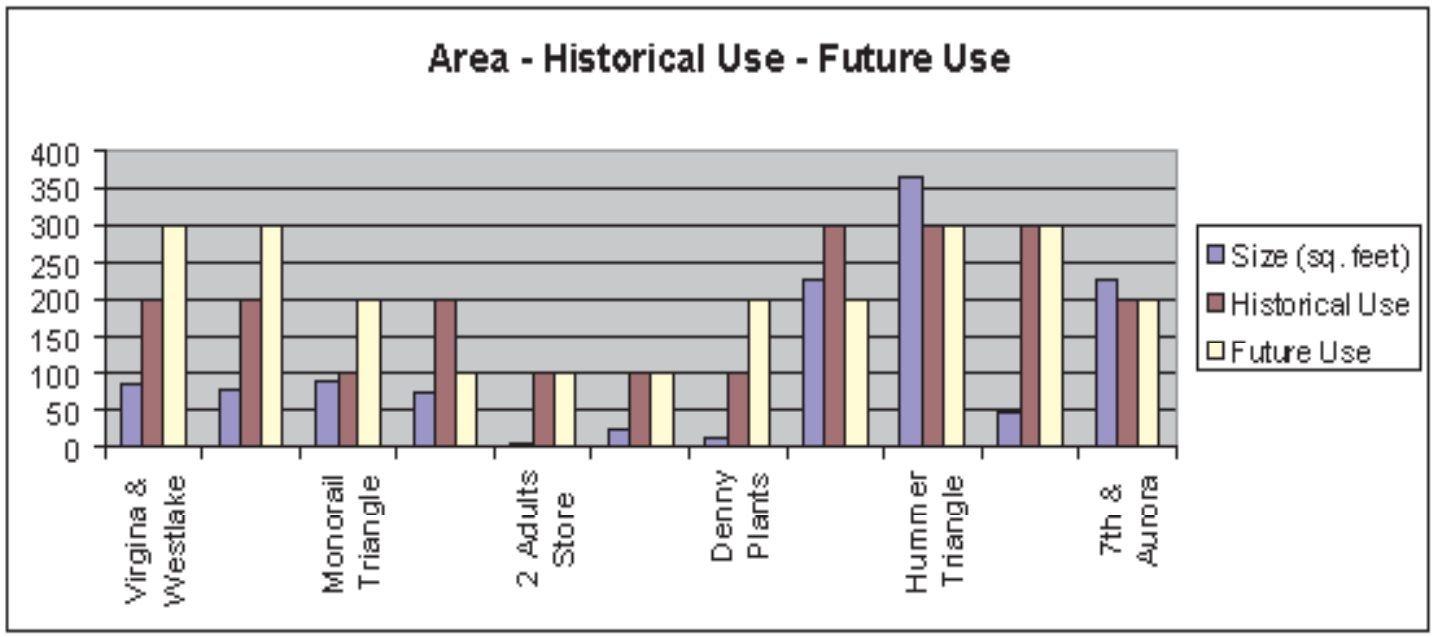
ANALYTICAL THEMES

- Higher zoning tended to correlate with historical significance. Areas within higher densities are probably older parts of the city.

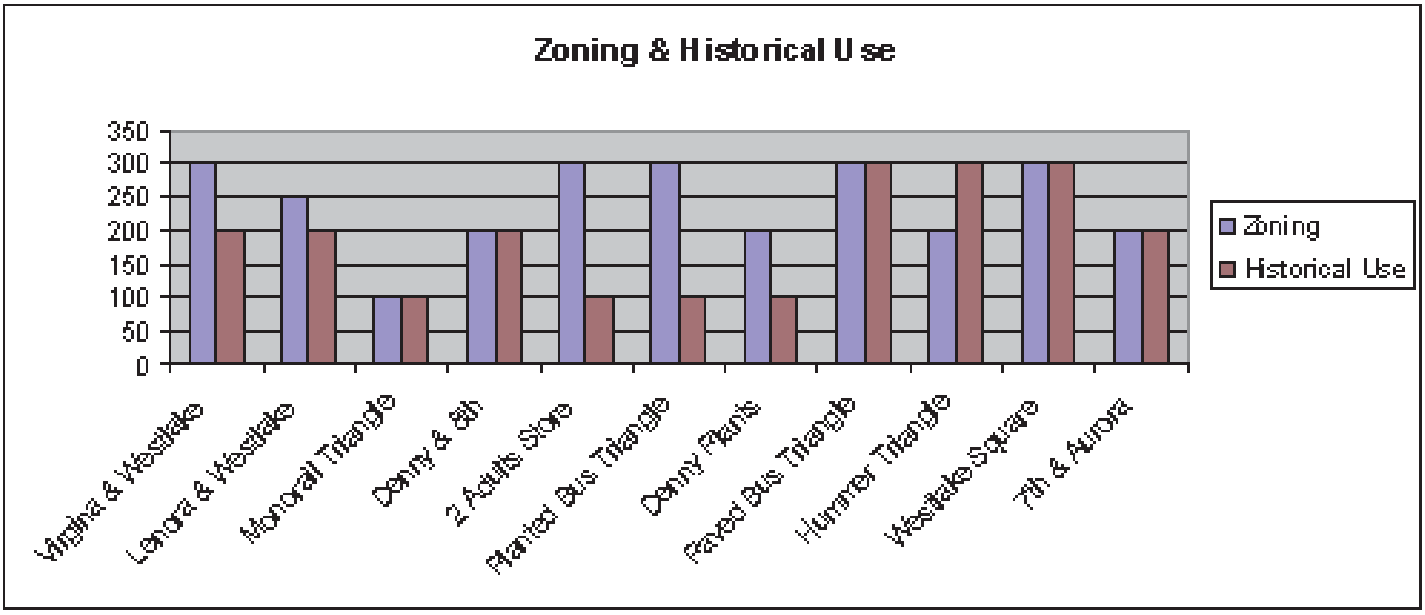
- In most cases the larger the triangle the



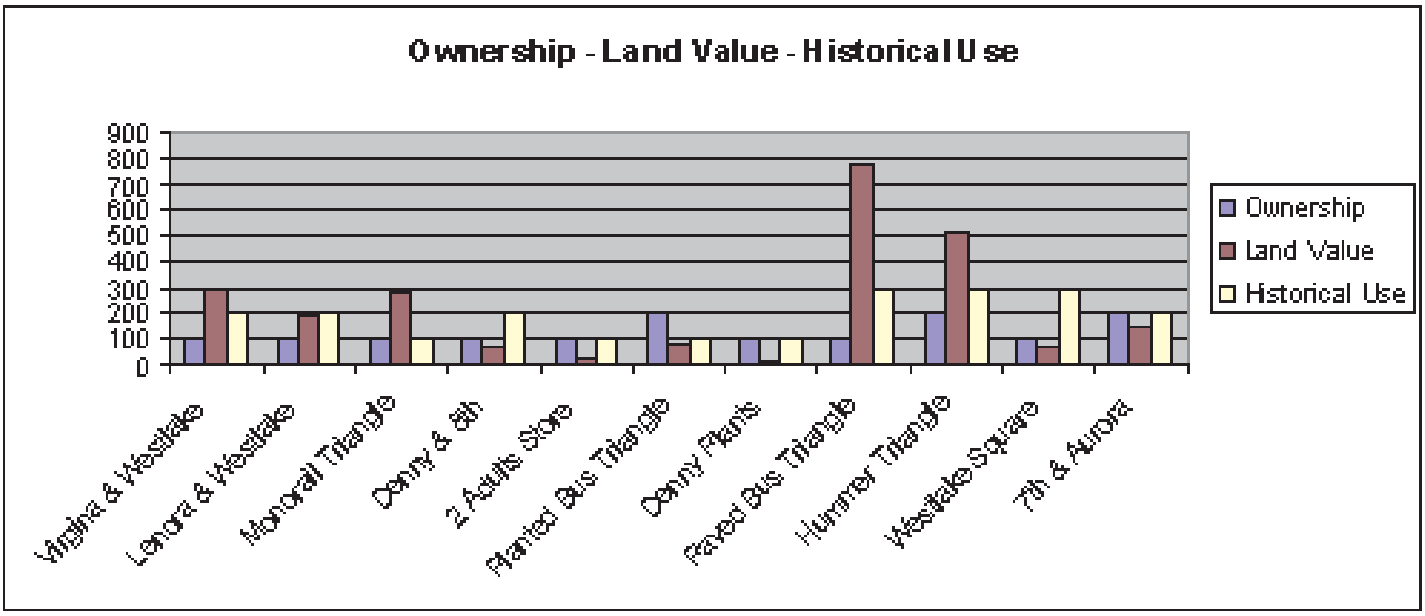
The historical use tends to encourage the potential future use. The present use has little effect.



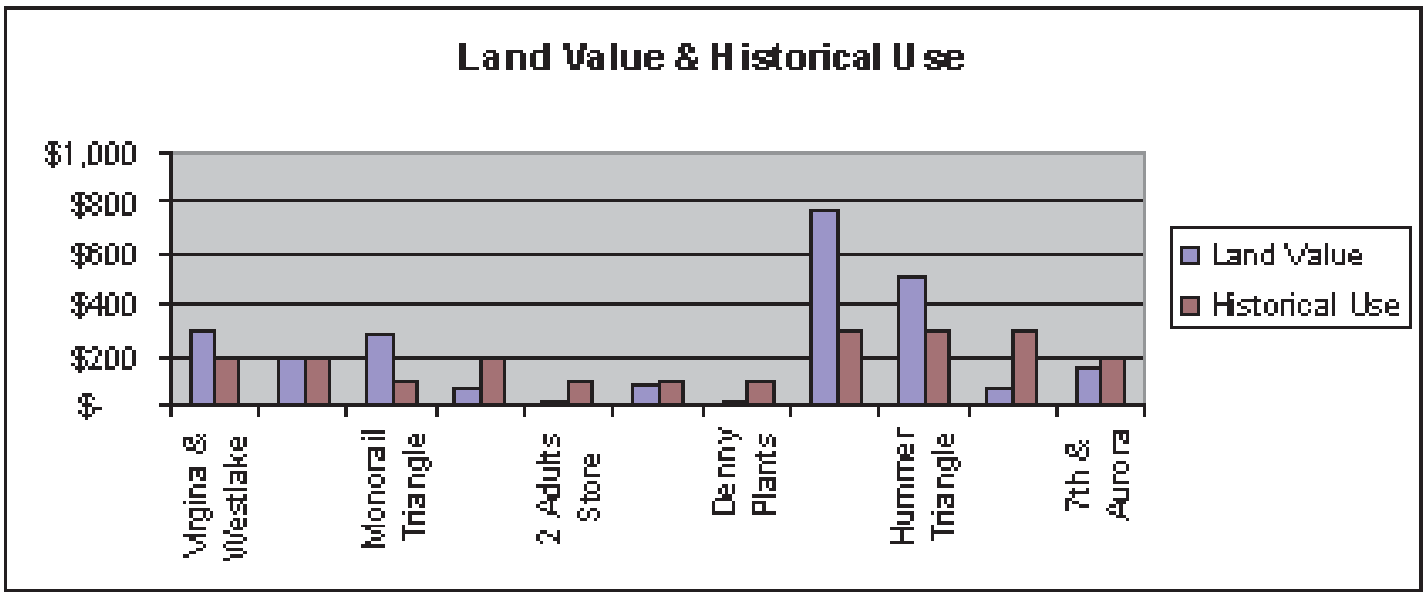
In most cases the larger the triangle the greater of historical significance and future use. Historical use does not inhibit future development.



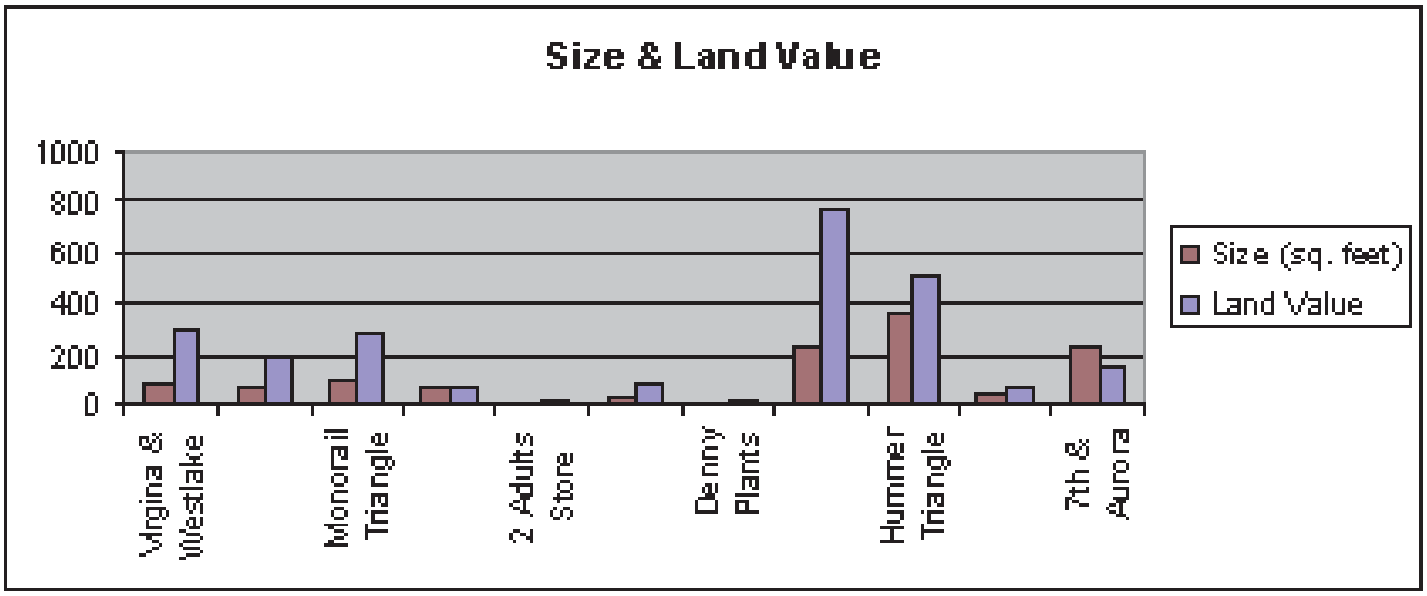
Higher densities of zoning tended to correlate with historical significance. This could because older parts of the city tend to be near the highest concentrations of development. Except for the really small triangles (2 Adults Store, and Planted Bus).



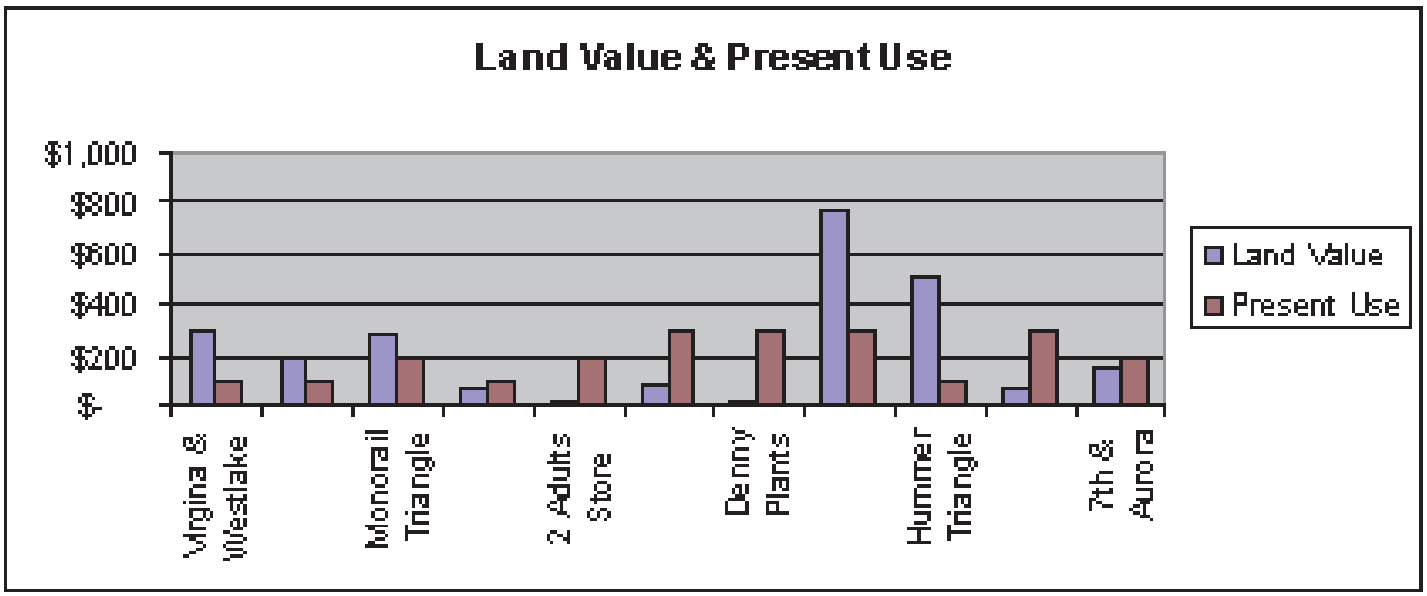
The higher land values tend to correlate with those triangles with the greatest amounts of historical significance, and low land values tend to associate with those spaces with the least amounts of historical significance.



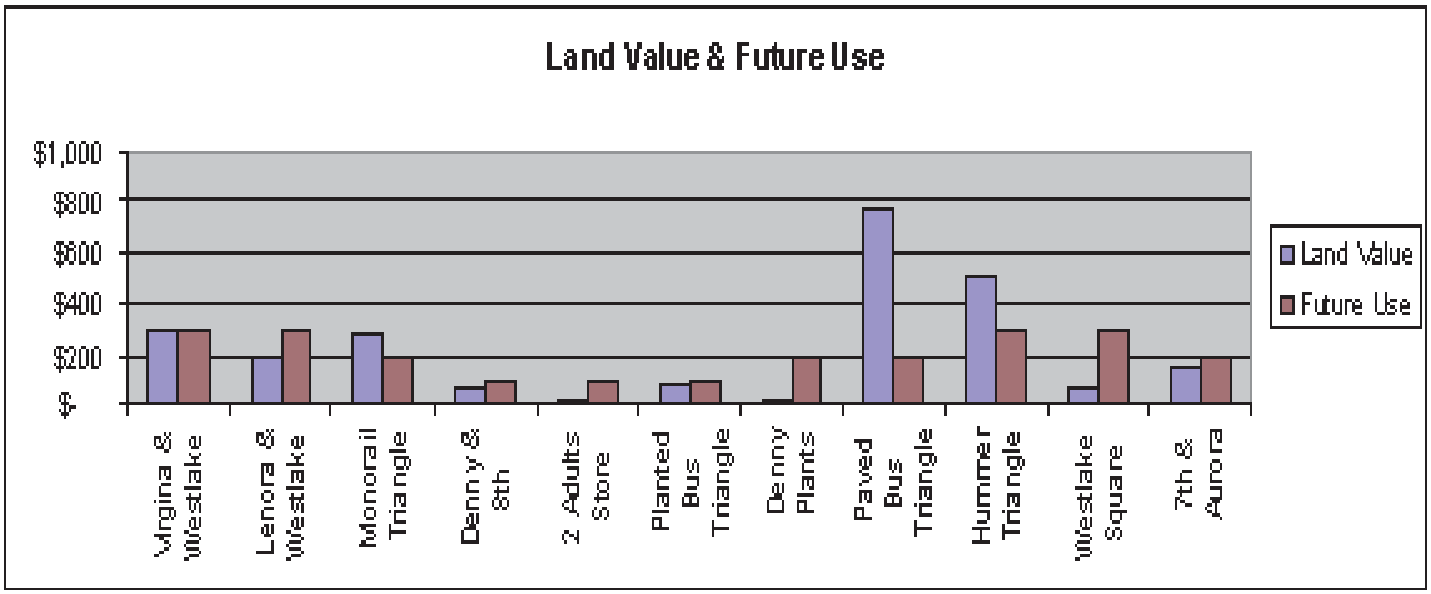
Higher land values have a strong relation with historical significance.



The size of the triangle had a strong connection to the land value, for obvious reasons.



Present use did not necessarily determine land values.



The land values for the triangles had a strong correlation with the potential future use.

greater historical significance and potential future use.

- Higher land value greater historical significance.

- Historical significance usually related to potential future use. Though present use was not much of a factor for future development.

- Higher land values usually correlated with potential future use.

CONCLUSION:

VERNACULAR SPACES

The Denny Triangles are vernacular spaces purely by their development. The triangles were a result of the planned network of roads. None of these spaces were originally designed in these forms. Only after the fact are any of these spaces considered for development. Yet, some of these triangles have found unique ways in serving the general public. The spaces themselves resemble a certain resiliency to be used, appropriated, adopted and cared for. Often they act as pedestrian islands amid a vehicular dominated neighborhood. They are small respite areas for people to stop, relax, and perhaps even enjoy the space and the amenities it provides. These spaces are also vernacular for the lack of attention devoted to them. They are ignored, discarded and perceived as worthless and temporal.
Yet, it is interesting to note that most of the triangles with any historical significance also tended to have a higher land value as well as potential for future development. We may view these spaces as insignificant, but in reality they serve greater purposes than we often realize. Instead of seeking out large tracts of land for new parks, that can be costly, more consideration should be done for these smaller urban open spaces. They are often owned by the City of Seattle, making it easier for implementation of design ideas, and their pure frequency allows for greater pedestrian networks, connections and green corridors. Small changes towards these triangles, such as changing the materials, or a single tree could have a dramatic effect. Rather than hopping from one concrete island to another, trying to avoid being hit by on coming traffic, pedestrians should be given more priorities. Contrasting these islands with materials, plantings, lighting can distinguish these spaces from the vehicle-reserved road. Most of these triangles right now are so associated and integrated with the actual road, that there is no perceived sense of safety. Changes to these triangles would promote pedestrian safety. The following is a brief summarization of some of the benefits for the development of these triangles:

- Green factor
- Pedestrian safety
- Cost benefits
- Stormwater management
- General increase of open space
- Pedestrian amenities
- Habitat

PRESERVATION:

The Denny Triangles with their temporal characters also contain layers of history worth acknowledging and perhaps preserving such as in Westlake Square. The tendency of these spaces to be ignored and forgotten has coincidently preserved many revealing aspects about Seattle's history. Westlake Square is an exceptionally good and rare example of how these triangular spaces contain history without total eradication. Once a building is demolished, there is not a lot of artifacts that remain to preserve its history, hence so much attention devoted to the historic preservation of architecturally significant buildings. These Denny Triangles are an integral part of the transportation network of Seattle that has existed far longer than any building. They may change over time, but often they are simple paved over, or added upon. The layers of history are often just under the surface of contemporary society. As long as

the right of ways and road alignments are maintained, accommodating different modes of transportation through the years (horses, streetcars, vehicles, buses, light rail), these triangles will remain. They have a unique way of preserving history by their forms, materials, and historical uses, even if all this is not present on the surface. When historically significant triangles such as Westlake Square become known, more work should be devoted in preserving its historical use, character, or meaning. If such triangles like Westlake Square exist, there are probably more triangles just within Seattle that contain rich histories worth investigating. The perceived insignificance of these urban spaces does not aid in discovering their histories, though they are often preserved, just under the surface. More research will have to be done to reveal these histories. It is often the most under utilized, insignificant, vernacular spaces that contain the richest stories.

Author

Author

Author: One late evening, the author ventured downtown to investigate a hole under Westlake Square, in hopes of seeing some remnants of the filled in underground comfort station. The hole ended up not being big enough, but layers of old brick could be seen. Future construction on Westlake Square for the new streetcar could provide more opportunities to investigate the historic restroom.

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