



# SEARCHING FOR RECORDS IN THE SEATTLE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES

---

# WHAT WE'LL COVER

How to search for different types of records

How our records are organized and described

How to access records

# WHAT IS THE SEATTLE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES (SMA)?

SMA's holdings document the history, development, and activities of the agencies and elected officials of the City of Seattle. (That is, records created by or received by City government.)

See our Introduction to the Archives e-learning course for more information if you're not familiar with SMA.



# THERE ARE TWO MAIN PLACES TO SEARCH SMA RECORDS:

## Finding Aids

- Describes groups of records
- Contains descriptions, not the records themselves
- Best for choosing records to answer a research question

## Digital Collections

- Describes items individually
- Includes digital copies when available
- Best when you're looking for visual materials

# IS EVERYTHING AVAILABLE ONLINE?

Many (but not all) visual items like photos and maps are digitized and available in Digital Collections.

Most textual records are not scanned – they can be viewed in our research room.

The small number of textual records that are scanned are available in Digital Collections.

# SMA STAFF ARE HERE TO ASSIST!

If you have questions about using the search tools, or don't find what you're looking for, contact us at [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov). We can provide help with the databases and check unscanned and unprocessed items.

Let's take a look at the first place to search...



# FINDING AIDS

---

# WHAT ARE FINDING AIDS?

Finding aids are guides that allow users to discover, understand, and access archival collections. They describe the creation, arrangement, content, and context of archival materials.

The Finding Aids site contains descriptions of records. Think of it as kind of like a library catalog that can point you to records of interest.

# CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT!

Finding aids include contextual information such as:

Who created the  
record

What set of  
records this folder  
is part of

What else is  
related

Items in archives don't stand alone – their context can give important clues to your research!

# RECORDS ARE DESCRIBED AT THREE LEVELS:

Record  
Group

Record groups consist of all materials created by the same person, department, or agency

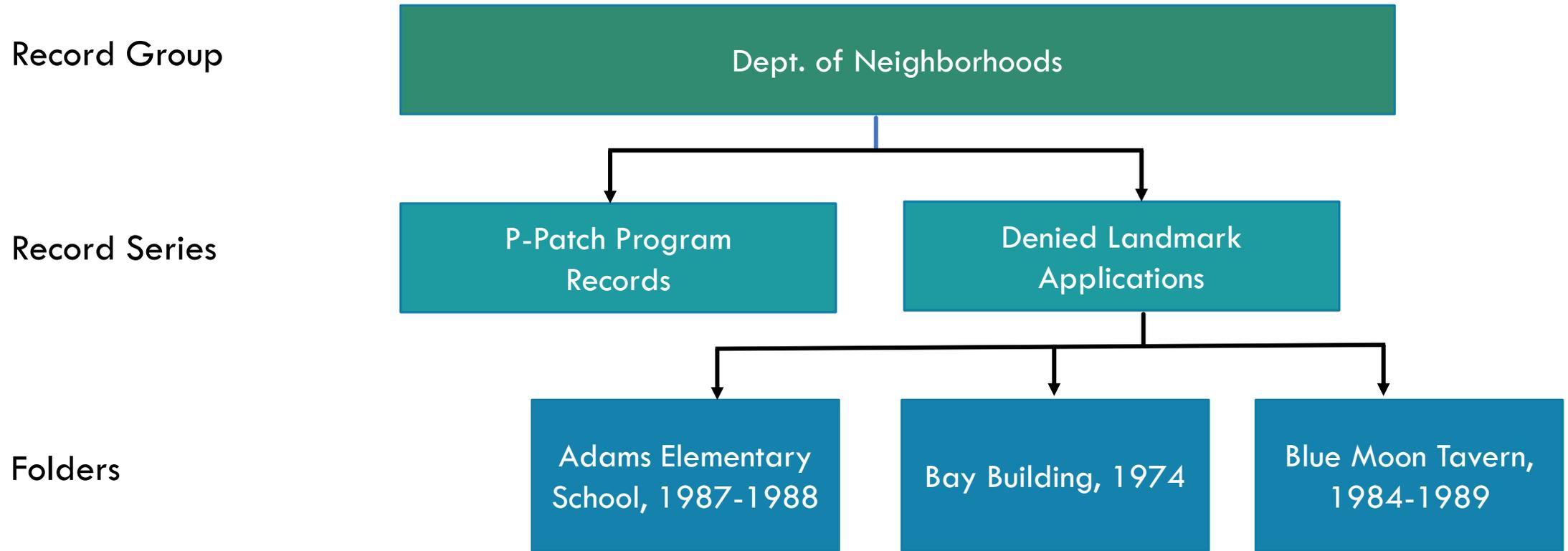
Record  
Series

A subset of record groups, record series are collections of records of similar type created for a similar purpose (e.g., City Light annual reports, Engineering Department bridge records)

Folder

Folders are just that: folders with items inside. This is the most detailed level of description for most textual records.

# For example:

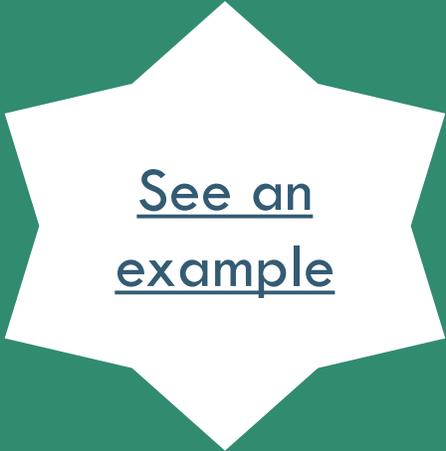


There may be many folders in a record series, and many record series in a record group.

# RECORD GROUP DESCRIPTION

Includes:

- History of the agency or a biography of the elected official
- List of the record series that are part of the record group

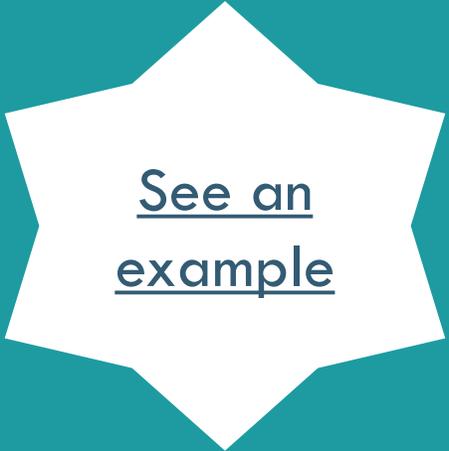


[See an example](#)

# RECORD SERIES DESCRIPTION

Includes:

- Contents of the records (scope note)
- Volume of the records and dates covered
- Subject headings
- Creator of the records
- List of folders if applicable

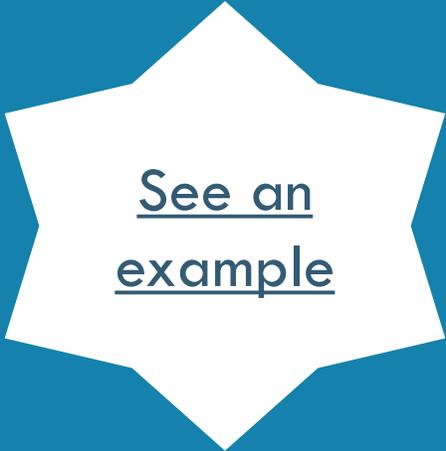


[See an  
example](#)

# FOLDER DESCRIPTION

Includes:

- Folder title and dates
- Context of the folder
- Link to record series the folder is part of
- Link to electronic copy if there is one



[See an  
example](#)

# LEVELS ARE LINKED TO EACH OTHER



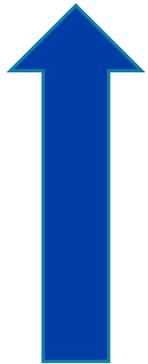
Folders link to their related record series and series to their related record groups.



## Seattle Municipal Archives Finding Aids

it

BROWSE: [SERIES](#) [SUBJECTS](#) [NAMES](#) [RECORD GROUPS](#)



You can **browse** record groups, record series, subjects, and names if you just want to look around the collections.

If you're looking for something in particular, use the search function.

# SEARCHING

Enter terms in the search box. If desired, you can use the drop-down menus and date fields to target your search.

## Welcome to Seattle Municipal Archives Finding Aids

Search across our collections

### Search The Archives



Years:

To



# WHAT LEVEL SHOULD I SEARCH?

Record group: to see everything created by one agency/official

---

Record series: to see descriptions of collections

---

Folders: to find folders across all collections related to a topic

---

Can also search names or subjects

# TOO MANY SEARCH RESULTS?

**Filter Results**

Search within results

From year To year

Search

**Additional filters:**

**Repository**  
Seattle Municipal Archives 627

**Type**  
Archival Object 590  
Collection 30  
Record Group 7  
Subject 3

**Subject**  
Seattle (Wash.) 22  
Seattle 20  
Parks -- Washington (State) -- Seattle 10  
Warren G. Magnuson Park (Seattle, Wash.) 9  
Magnuson Park 8  
v more

**Language**  
English 127

**Names**  
Seattle (Wash.). City Council 19  
Seattle (Wash.). City Clerk 15  
Williams, Jeanette K. (Jeanette Klemptner) 8

- Use the search box to set a date range or add an additional keyword to search within the results
- You can use filters to narrow by type or select specific names or subjects

# ADVANCED TIPS FOR SEARCHING

See our Finding Aids [help page](#) for more information on phrasing searches, constructing complex searches, and more.



# DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

---

Photos, maps, moving images, audio, published documents, scanned textual records

Mostly item-level description (but if entire folders are scanned they are included here)

Digital copies included when available

## WHAT'S IN DIGITAL COLLECTIONS?



[About](#)

[Browse](#)

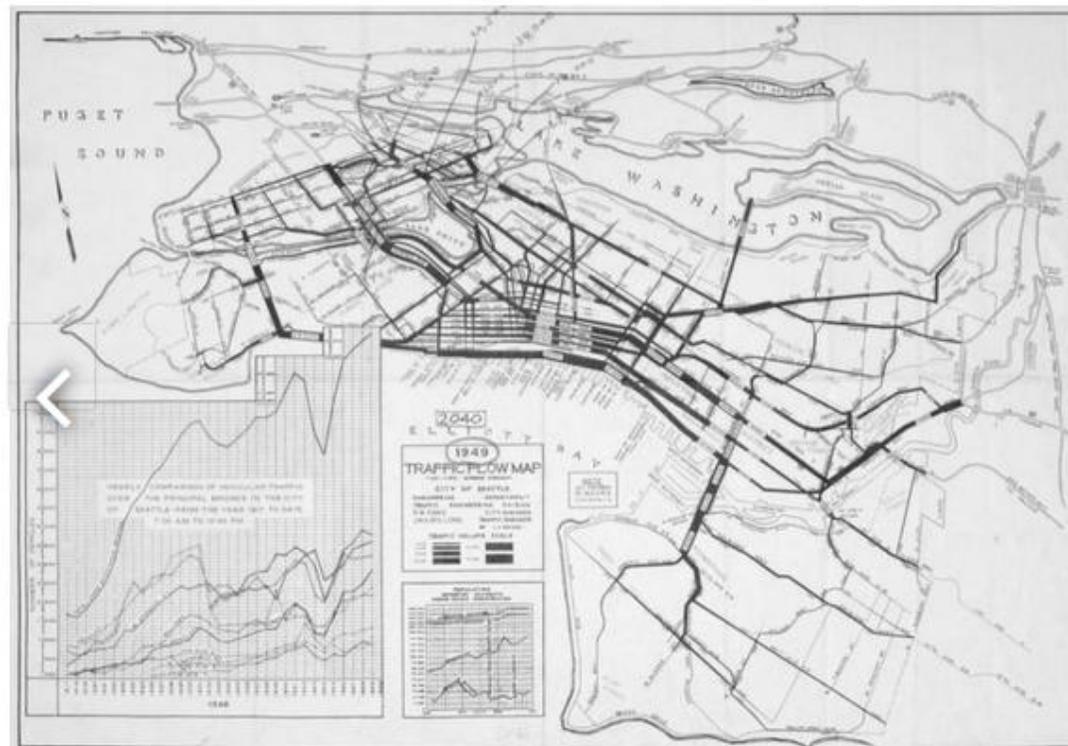
[Gallery](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

[Finding Aids](#)

[Collections Home](#)

[SMA Home](#)



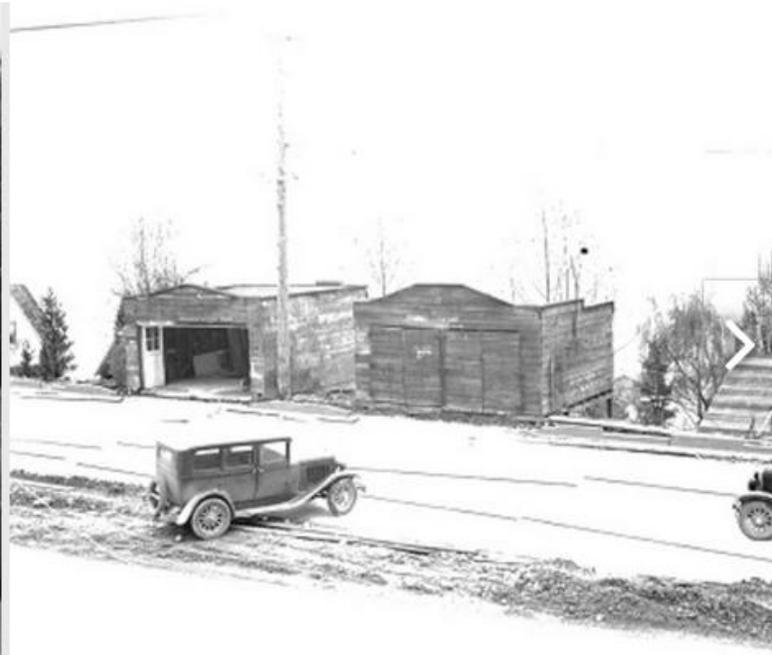
You can browse Digital Collections by object types.

Each item has a catalog record with information about its date, people or geographic locations included, what record series it comes from, and more. If there is a digital copy of the item, it will be included here, and audio and moving image files are playable right from the page.



*Click each image to see sample records*

# BASIC SEARCH



The search box at top right searches across all items on the site.

# ADVANCED SEARCH

The [advanced search form](#) allows you to limit your search by object type, date, subject, and other fields.

The Quick Tips on this page have more information on constructing complex searches.

## FILTER BY

### OBJECT TYPE

Audio

Drawings

Image Records

Moving Images

Textual Records

### DECADE

1890s

1900s

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

[and 6 more](#)

### COLLECTION

Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Special  
Committee Re...

Alex Pedersen Photographs

Appointments and Oaths of Office

Ballard Avenue Landmark District Board Minutes

# SEARCH RESULTS

Once you have the set of objects matching the search, you can sort and filter the results and customize your view

Use the share button to create a link to send a set of results to yourself or someone else.

16 OBJECT RESULTS 

SEARCH: west seattle bridge OBJECT TYPE: IMAGE RECORD  DECADE: 1950S  Share

COPY THE LINK TO THIS SEARCH:  Copy [Close](#)



  
58061  
Spokane Street Bridge #2. Redecking.  
[West Seattle Bridge].  
August 14 1958

  
58062  
Spokane Street Bridge #2. Redecking.  
[West Seattle Bridge].  
August 14 1958

  
58063  
Spokane Street Bridge #2. Redecking.  
[West Seattle Bridge].  
August 14 1958

# FINDING AIDS AND DIGITAL COLLECTIONS ARE CONNECTED



Items in Digital Collections will link to the series record in Finding Aids, and Finding Aids will link to content in Digital Collections

# HOW DO I GET COPIES OF DIGITAL ITEMS?

**ORIGINAL FORMAT:**

Glass Plate Negative

**BOX:**

3

**NOTE:**

**SUBJECT TERMS:**

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

CONSTRUCTION

DOWNTOWN

DOWNLOAD AS  ▾



Use the download link in the catalog record – choose “original” for best quality.

If you need a higher resolution scan than what is available on the site, we can usually rescan the item for you. Contact us at [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov) with your specifications.

# HOW DO I ACCESS RECORDS THAT AREN'T SCANNED?

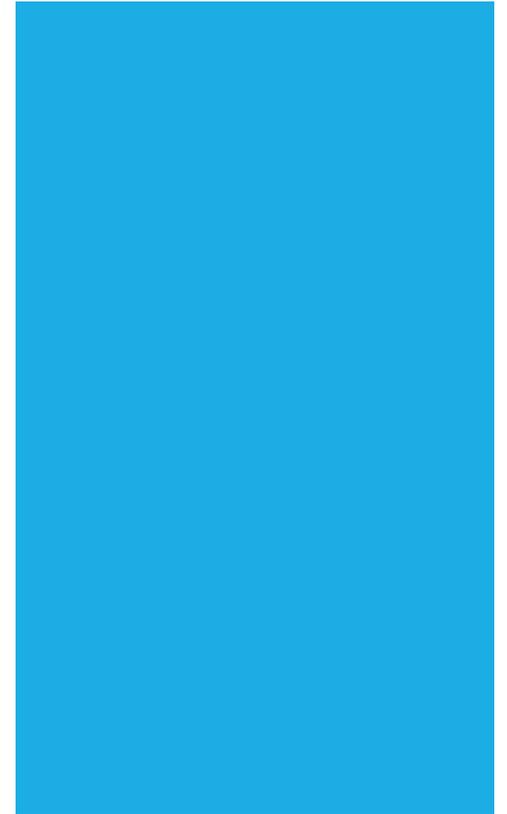
Items that are not available electronically through Digital Collections can be viewed in our research room.

See our [Visiting the Archives](#) page for more information, or look for our Visiting the Archives e-learning course.

# HANDS ON

If you want to practice what you've learned, look for these items in [Finding Aids](#) or [Digital Collections](#):

- A map of Denny Park from the 1890s
- Folders relating to the creation of the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center
- Photos of the Space Needle under construction
- All of Councilmember Jeanette Williams' records in the archives



# WE WELCOME QUESTIONS!

Contact [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov) if you need assistance with the search tools or with accessing records. Look for our other e-learning courses to learn more about SMA or about searching for specific record types like photos or audiovisual materials.