The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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

REPORT ON DESIGNATION LPB119/01

Name and Address of Property: **Magnolia Library**
2801 34th Avenue West

Legal Description:

Carlton Park Terrace Division 3, Block 4, Lots 1, 2 and 3

At the public meeting held on March 21, 2001, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Magnolia Library as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25. 12.350:

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

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

History of the City's Branch Libraries

City residents living in the northeast region of Seattle received their first municipal library services in March 1906 when the University Branch opened in the University Pharmacy which was located at the entrance to the University of Washington campus. In November the library was relocated to the neighborhood's Methodist Church. That same year the Library System established a separate Branch Department. Deposit stations were created in 1907, and in 1908 the City received a grant of $105,000 for construction of three branches including Greenlake, West Seattle and the University Branch. (Two additional branches – Fremont and Yesler/Douglass-Truth Libraries -- were funded by a $70,000 Carnegie Grant in 1911.) The University Branch Library opened in August 1910 at its present location at Roosevelt Way Northeast and Northeast 47th Street.

By 1913 library patrons throughout the city were served from 495 distribution points: the Central Library, six drugstore deposit stations, seven branch libraries, six playgrounds, eight special deposit stations, 24 fire engine houses, stations, and 443 separate schoolrooms. The system's Schools

Division, called the "Teachers Room", opened under the supervision of the Children's Department in 1910. A Stations Division opened in 1921. In the late 1920s, responsibility for library service to school children shifted, and the Library System and Seattle Public Schools created the first model school library in Hamilton Intermediate School in Wallingford.

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

Seattle boomed during World War II and its library expanded services vastly in the 1940s to serve military personnel as well as local residents. In 1942 the Branch system was revived and John S. Richards was appointed city librarian. Between 1942 and 1948, 25 library stations were established including one at Sand Point in 1943. In 1943 the King County Library System was created, contracting with the Seattle Public Library for services. Richards immediately began planning for the city's post-war era.

Expansion of post war library services continued in the 1950s in both Seattle and King County. Seattle's library expanded its services in the 1950s to include chamber concerts, teas, book clubs, and annual classroom visits to 150 public schools. In 1953 Seattle annexed nearly 15 square miles, including the Lake City and Northgate areas, increasing its population by 54,000.

Historic Context of the Magnolia Neighborhood

The Magnolia Neighborhood was named when an early explorer of Puget Sound mistook the madrona trees along the bluff for magnolia trees, and made a mark on his map calling the area "Magnolia Bluff." Years later, when the community formed, the name stuck. Many years later, in 1948, a local garden club sponsored a "Plant a Magnolia" project. Today the neighborhood contains hundreds of magnolia trees, thereby setting the arboreal record straight.

The Magnolia Library is located on 35th Avenue West, three blocks north of Magnolia's village-like commercial center, at the intersection of West Armour Street. Magnolia is a peninsula neighborhood, which is topographically distinct and isolated from the balance of Seattle. The western edge overlooks Puget Sound. To the north are the Ship Canal and Ballard, and to the south Elliott Bay. Currently to the southeast are Port of Seattle Piers 90 and 91, and farther to the east, Queen Anne Hill. The first white settler in Magnolia was Dr. Henry Smith, who in 1852 staked a claim along the deep cove and adjacent mudflats that almost separate Magnolia from Queen Anne Hill and the rest of the city. The cove was eventually renamed Smith's Cove. Soon other settlers arrived, mostly to farm the land atop the bluff.

Although some may think of Magnolia as a hilltop community, it is actually made up of several topographically distinct portions: Interbay is the low-lying community at the eastern foot of the Magnolia plateau. It was once a tidal wetland area at the north end of Elliott Bay until railroad development and landfills raised it ca. 1890. Interbay and the lower edge of Magnolia's eastern hill, which faces it were developed during the earlier railroad era of the 1880s and 1890s. Interbay served historically as the location of numerous rail lines, train repair yards, including the Great Northern Railroad (currently the Burlington Northern Railroad) round house.

On the northeast edge of Magnolia are Salmon Bay, Fisherman's Terminal and the south shoreline of the Ship Canal. After the Chittenden Locks were completed in 1916, this area became the site of fresh water commercial marinas and ship repair yards. The two, lowland communities, Interbay and Salmon Bay, developed with inner-city industrial facilities, small single family dwellings, small stores and taverns, and boarding houses for railroad workers. Since the late 1950s these communities have been known as the Lawton Park neighborhood.

Two prominent north-south ridges make up Magnolia Hill with ridge tops at an elevation of 450± feet above sea level. A valley runs between them along what is currently 34th Avenue West, one block east of the Magnolia Branch Library. This relatively flat parcel of land was known originally as Pleasant Valley. It was settled with farms and orchards around 1900.

Magnolia's small retail district was developed initially around West McGraw Street and 34th Avenue West from 1915 through the 1930s. The community was created as a motorized streetcar suburb with many single-family, middle class houses, and a small neighborhood commercial district known as Magnolia Village.

The south end of the eastern ridge is known as Magnolia Bluff. Initially it was developed by the federal government during World War I with Navy housing facilities overlooking Piers 90 and 91. A tall promontory, Magnolia Bluff, provides panoramic water and city views. The Bluff initially developed as an exclusive "residential island." It was linked to Elliott Avenue and Seattle's primary waterfront by a wood trestle bridge, which was constructed ca. 1900, and replaced by an elevated steel bridge in 1931. Piers 90 and 91 were deeded to the City of Seattle after World War II and have been developed further by the Port of Seattle.

The northwest portion of Magnolia includes the community's oldest development and some of its newest neighborhoods. This area was selected as a military site in the 1880s and was developed by the federal government as Fort Lawton, an observation and fortification post. The fort was developed further in 1916 during the build up for World War. At the end of the Great War this site remained an active military base. Fort Lawton later served as an embarkation facility and as a camp for German and Italian prisoners of war during World War II. During the Cold War it was selected as an ABAM (Anti-Ballistic Air Missile) facility, and part of it currently remains as a military fort with radar facilities.

The residential blocks immediately surrounding the public library appear to have developed after World War II, and most of the buildings evidence a style and character contemporary with the post-war era. In contrast to residential plats in older areas, such as Interbay, the typical parcels on this part of this ridge are larger, and most houses date from the 1950s and 1960s. The dominant building

type is one and two story historic revival or contemporary single family dwellings, which are upscale and well maintained.

Because of its relatively late development, there are no designated landmarks on the Magnolia plateau. Its Modern-era quality contrasts with the older homes, churches, and commercial buildings common in the neighborhoods that were settled in the railroad era or as early suburbs, ca. 1900 – 1930 -- Interbay, Salmon Bay, and Pleasant Valley.

Currently the only official historic landmark in Magnolia, in addition to Fort Lawton (which is a National Register Property), is the steel truss Salmon Bay Bridge that was designated by the City. This railroad bridge crosses the Ship Canal near West Commodore Way and 35th Avenue West. Although it has not been nominated or designated, the Magnolia Library is recognized as a landmark by the community. This favored status is noted in Aleua Frare's Magnolia Yesterday and Today, a local history published by the Community Club, and it was also apparent in early public meetings sponsored by the Seattle Public Library to discuss the future of the building.

Presently Magnolia remains a very distinct neighborhood in Seattle. There is a strong sense of identity in the community, perhaps due to its unusual topography. While the neighborhood has a retail center and commercial activities on its edges, it is primarily residential. According to the 1990 census, Magnolia is home to approximately 20,000 people. Residents tend to have higher levels of formal education with 47% having a bachelor or graduate degree, compared to 37% citywide. Households in the district are similar in size and composition to the rest of the city, although median home prices are much higher than those elsewhere in Seattle. Incomes tend to be higher, with a 1990 median household income at $33,235 compared to $29,353 citywide. The district also has a lower poverty rate – 6.3% compared to 12.4% citywide.

A History of the Magnolia Library

In 1932, with a neighborhood population of 5,000, Magnolia residents began campaigning for a community library. By placing collection cans next to cash registers in local stores, approximately $1,500 was raised. An additional $300 was donated by the Magnolia Community Club from its treasury. However, due to the Depression, the Seattle Public Library did not respond to Magnolia's request for a neighborhood library until 1943, at which time SPL agreed to furnish books and a part-time librarian under the condition that Magnolia residents identify a location. Soon thereafter, the Magnolia Manor station opened successfully at 3200 - 3002 West McGraw Street in rented quarters. The Seattle Public Library took over the lease in 1945, moving the stacks to a larger leased space on West McGraw Street, where the library remained for several years.

The rapidly growing library, in need of larger quarters, moved into a rehabilitated Safeway building, also on West McGraw, in January 1959. Meanwhile, two library bond issues had been presented to the citizens of Seattle to fund a new Central Library and additional branch libraries, first in 1950 and 1952. Both bonds failed, largely due to the unstable economy, influenced by the inflationary rise of prices, limited materials, and the onset of the Korean War.

In response to the bond failure, the City Council allotted funds from the city's Cumulative Reserve Fund for three new branch libraries and a new vehicle for Mobile Services. North East, Greenwood, and Henry Libraries all finished construction in 1954.

In 1956, a $5 million library bond issue passed, the bulk of which was designated to fund a new downtown Central Library. The remaining funds were allotted for construction of three additional new branch libraries and the purchase of a library site in Lake City. Upon its completion in 1964, the Magnolia Library was the last of the three branch facilities; Southwest Library and Ballard Library opened in 1961 and 1963, respectively.

Paul Kirk, of Kirk, Wallace, McKinley and Associates, was commissioned to design the new library. Kirk's reputation as a designer was well established by the late 1950s due to his work on wood frame single-family residences, medical clinics, and churches. His firm was selected, in part, for its previous work on the Faculty Club Building on the University of Washington Campus (designed with Victor Steinbrueck). This building had been described as a structure "that rises on a hillside and seems to spring from the trees that surround it." (Magnolia News, 6/265/64)

According to Kirk, the design for the Magnolia Library also was influenced significantly by its site, a heavily wooded lot located in a residential area. Several existing trees were incorporated in the design, including a large madrona that influenced the design of the main entry. Landscape architect Richard Haag was commissioned for the design of the landscape surrounding the library.

Construction began in 1963, and the building was dedicated in July 1964. The completed cost for the building was approximately $214,000. The Magnolia Manor station closed upon the opening of the new branch library in 1964.

Materials were selected to reflect the native environment, and applied in a regional variant of Modernism. The building reflects a traditional Japanese approach that celebrates the exposed building structure. Kirk described the firm's intentions: "We desperately wanted to give Magnolia a building residential in character, warm to match the fine madrona trees on the lot and yet functional inside as a modern library should be." The red cedar shingle cladding was also selected for its low maintenance and long-lasting qualities.

The building's exposed post and beam structure was nationally commended for its detailing, abundance of natural day lighting, and sensitive siting. The Magnolia Library was honored with an architectural award of excellence, given by the American Library Association and the national American Institute of Architects in 1966. A year later, the building was published in *Architectural Record*, where it was recognized for "the modesty of its architectural solution, the unaffected residential scale appropriate to the area it serves, and the delightful use it makes of its wooded hill site."

Furniture and Artwork in the Magnolia Library

George Nakashima, internationally renowned woodworker, designed and built the solid walnut tables and chairs for the Magnolia Library. Nakashima was born in Spokane, Washington, and completed his bachelors degree in architecture at the University of Washington. After receiving his master's degree from MIT in the early 1930s, Nakashima studied art in Paris. He moved to Tokyo to join the architectural office of Czech-American architect, Antonin Raymond.

Nakashima returned to Seattle in 1940 with the intention of establishing a furniture workshop. However, along with all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast, Nakashima and his family were moved to an internment camp in Idaho during World War II. To secure his release from the camp, Nakashima contacted Raymond, who had by then moved to Bucks County Pennsylvania, for sponsorship. During the remaining war years, Nakashima lived on Raymond's farm, eventually settling on a nearby property in New Hope, Pennsylvania, where he built a series of Modernist facilities as his furniture workshop.

The tables that Nakashima built for the Magnolia Library are typical of his designs. They are spare, fashioned from untrimmed slabs of book-matched walnut that are joined at the center with exposed mahogany dovetails. Nakashima's furniture was included in the general budget for the Magnolia Library, but there were no additional funds available for the commission of public art. In response, a citizens committee of Magnolia residents established a Library Art Fund, raising over $2,000. Glen Alps was selected by the committee to design a wall-mounted sculpture that was to be placed in the courtyard of the new library. Alps was a well-known artist in the Northwest, and professor in the Art Department at the University of Washington. His work was represented in the downtown library by a custom-designed and fabricated screen that was integrated into the building's third floor plan.

Alps worked in various media, gaining international recognition for his collages and printmaking. His piece for the Magnolia Library is comprised of a number of crisscrossing bronze rods, intended to signify "not an abstraction nor…a representation of anyone (sic) material object, but rather…an aesthetic identity all its own, without relying upon outside associational values for its existence." (Statement by Glen Alps, 11/2/64)

Remaining funds from the Library Art Fund allowed for the purchase of two freestanding sculptures by artist Ebba Rapp McLauchlan, titled "Doves on Driftwood" and "Girl Holding Doves". Both sculptures are made of high-fired clay. The "Doves on Driftwood" sculpture was given in memory of Muriel M. Monney, a pioneer in the Magnolia community and supporter of the library.

In January of 1970, the Magnolia Library was burglarized, and several pieces of Nakashima's furniture and McLauchlan's "Doves" sculpture were stolen. The missing pieces were replaced. In the early 1990s, Alp's sculpture was stolen, but later recovered.

The Architect - Paul Hayden Kirk of Kirk Wallace McKinley AIA and Associates

Paul Hayden Kirk was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on November 18, 1912, moving with his family to Seattle in 1922. After graduating from the University of Washington with an architectural degree in 1937, Kirk worked under various Seattle architects, including Floyd Naramore, A. M. Young, B. Dudley Stuart, and Henry Bittman, opening his own practice in 1939. Not unlike many of his peers, Kirk's early career was dominated by residential design, for which he was commended for possessing a "competent command of historicist forms and details."
Early tendencies toward simplified forms and details emerged in Kirk's designs for a speculative housing development on Columbia Ridge where limited materials and budget necessitated a more functional solution. During World War II, Kirk joined with other architects to take advantage of war contracts, partnering with former employer Stuart, and Robert Durham. For five years after the war, Kirk practiced with architect James J. Chiarelli. Chiarelli & Kirk's notable projects include the Crown Hill Medical-Dental Clinic (1947), and Lakewood Community Church (1949), and an apartment building on Lakeview Boulevard East (1949), which was both designed and developed by Paul Kirk.

From 1950 to 1957 Kirk worked again as a sole practitioner. During this time his designs for single family residences displayed characteristics of the International Style: flat roofs, bands of windows, and simple cubic shapes. Although Kirk eventually dismissed the International Style " 'as an architecture which has been imposed on the land by Man,' " his blending of modernist principles and Northwest vernacular first emerged during this period of work.

In the mid to late-1950s, Kirk's projects displayed an increasing tendency toward complex structural detailing, often using wood. This is visible in his design for both the Group Health Cooperative Northgate Clinic (1957 - 1958), and the University Unitarian Church (1955 - 1959). Both buildings are constructed with exposed wood members arranged in a bypass or layered fashion that clearly delineates the primary, secondary, and tertiary elements of the structure.

Although Kirk rejected the International Style, he continued to adhere to the Miesian principal that "God is in the details." Structural complexity and attention to detail became signature elements of Kirk's work. The design of the Magnolia Library, completed in 1964, has been termed a "quintessential 'Kirk' building." The intricate detailing of the beamwork enforces the legibility of the structure, and Kirk's conscientious siting of the building and use of indigenous materials indicates an understanding of Modernism that surpassed rote methodology.

Kirk's residential work during this period gained national attention. In 1957 his projects were selected by a jury for *House and Garden* magazine to receive four of five national design awards. Kirk, with the designs for the Bowman, Lakeside Evans, Putnam and Russel houses, was "the big winner," but other Northwest architects gained recognition in this competition – Paul Thiry received a special mention for his Eastern Washington vacation house, and Tacoma architect Robert Billsbrough Price for two dwellings in Tacoma, the Jack Warnick house and the T. Harbine Monroe house. The awards were viewed locally with pride. The *Seattle Times* notes, "The 1957 results ought to settle which region is leading the nation in home architecture. Kirk says, 'Of course architects around here have an advantage in interesting topography and in the climate. A fellow designing for flat land doesn't have the same inspiration.' "

Kirk's practice evolved, and by 1957 was known as Paul Hayden Kirk & Associates. In 1960, Kirk promoted Donald S. Wallace and David A. McKinley to partners, thereby changing the firm's name to Kirk, Wallace, McKinley AIA and Associates. In addition to the Magnolia Library, projects from this era included the Exhibition Hall, Resident Theater (Intiman Theater) and the parking garage on the Seattle Center grounds (1959 - 1962), the Japanese Presbyterian Church (1962 - 1963), the French Administration Building at Washington State University (1965 - 1967), and Edmond S. Meany Hall at the University of Washington (1966 - 1974).

Although the scale of his commissions grew with his reputation, Kirk never strayed completely from residential design, because "a house, he feels, presents all of the root problems of architecture in their most compelling form." Kirk was recognized nationally for finding his inspiration in the individual conditions of each site, resulting in a diversity of design solutions.
Kirk's designs for two high-rise cast concrete framed dormitories at the University of Washington (1963 and 1965, respectively), however, sparked controversy. Critics and advocates had varying responses to the buildings, calling them " 'brutal and impersonal,' 'lacking in humility'… 'exciting, yet economical high-rise urban buildings.' "

Unlike many of his colleagues practicing in the Northwest, Kirk's work was widely published. Between 1945 and 1970, his designs were included in over sixty articles in various national architectural publications. His work was respected both locally and nationally, which contributed to Kirk's election to Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1959.

Seattle architect and historian, Victor Steinbrueck, a contemporary and colleague, praised Paul Kirk for his "masterful spatial design and composition, and fine knowledge of wood construction as a design consideration." *Architectural Forum* concurred in August 1962, commending Kirk's work for its "clarity, suitability, and restraint."

Kirk was active in civic affairs in Seattle. Throughout his career he was a frequent juror of professional design competitions. He was appointed to the city's Housing Board, and served as president of the Seattle Art Museum's Contemporary Art Council and the AIA's Washington Chapter, and as a trustee on the Boards of the Arboretum Foundation and the Blodel Reserve. With architect John Morse he authored a plan to purchase and rehabilitate buildings in the Pike Place Market as a city facility in 1969, a step that led to the Market's eventual preservation.

Paul Hayden Kirk retired from practice and transferred his firm to partner David McKinley as the McKinley Architects in 1979, and died in 1995.

The Landscape Architect, Richard Haag

Richard Haag's design for the landscape at the Magnolia Library was integral and complementary to Kirk's library design. Haag is known internationally for such projects as Seattle's Gasworks Park, which was designated a city landmark in 1999, the Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island, and the U.S. Embassy Grounds in Lisbon, Portugal.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1923, Haag received an undergraduate degree in landscape architecture from the University of California at Berkeley. He continued his studies at Harvard, where he received his Masters in Landscape Architecture in 1951. After graduating, Haag accepted a traveling fellowship to Kyoto University in Japan, returning to the states to work with renowned landscape architect Lawrence Halprin in San Francisco in 1956.

Haag moved to Seattle in 1958. At the time of his commission for the Magnolia Library, Richard Haag was associate professor in the Landscape Department at the University of Washington College of Architecture. Frustrated with the rigidity of late-Modernist principles, students were drawn to Haag's deep convictions that "the individual's primary role in the landscape is to understand nature's work and disposition; the biological regime and its cosmological order."

Haag's design for the landscape surrounding the Magnolia Library worked to integrate with the building design. Similar to Kirk's wood detailing and Nakashima's furniture, it expressed a respect for natural materials, Japanese aesthetic influences, and indigenous forms.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Site

The Magnolia Library is located at the corner of West Armour Street and 34th Avenue West. The neighborhood is composed entirely of single family residences. In close proximity is Our Lady of Fatima Church and School, and the West Magnolia Playfield.
The library site is raised eight feet above street grade, and measures approximately 151'-5" in length and 124'-6" in width. The library building is oriented north/south, along the length of the site. A concrete stairway rises between two brick spirals at the sidewalk and provides pedestrian access to the site from 34th Avenue West. A curved brick path connects the upper stair landing to the main entry at the south of the building. Another stairway, at the south end of the site, connects West Armour Street to the main building entry. A sixteen-car parking lot, with a driveway off West Armour Street, is located on the west edge of the site. Two enclosed gardens are located at the north end of the site.

The east and south edges of the site rise above sidewalk level, and are landscaped with low-growing ground cover and junipers, interspersed with rhododendrons. The madrona tree that once flanked the main entry has been replaced.

The Building Structure

The Magnolia Library is a single story building composed of two separate volumes: the public library space to the east, and the staff and service core to the west. The rectangular building footprint is 119'-5" in length and 59'-5" in width or 6,523 square feet in net area.

The building rests on a concrete slab with a partial basement at the west side. The wood framed, post and beam structure is arranged in a "bypass" system, where exposed of double beams, set apart from another, pass on both sides of structural posts. Multiple sets of beams are layered, set

perpendicular to each other. Glazing and stud walls infill between posts. Stud walls are typically clad with shingles, both at the exterior and in some areas of the interior. The roof is flat, and varies in height between the staff core and public library space. Four monitors with clerestory glazing break the ceiling plane at the upper roof level.

Two sets of glu-lam beams that run east-west support the roof. The placement of these two sets of beams defines the ceiling heights of the main library space and those in the staff and service areas. The upper 8-1/8" x 26" beams are set at 13'-4" from the finished floor, and routed at the bottom to key in the 4 x 4 spacers. The lower set of beams is made up by a pair of 2 x 10s, aligned below the glu-lams at 9'-2½" from the finished floor. A third pair of 2 x 8 beams runs north-south along the length of the building, set directly below the pair of 2 x 10s. The beams span the full length and width of the building, and are stabilized by wood spacers. The beams bypass either side of the 4-7/8" glu-lam perimeter posts, and extend beyond the walls to create overhanging eaves that emphasize the horizontality of the structure. The depth of the eaves varies at each elevation. The eaves are soffited with stained tongue and groove wood boards. The monitors are set above the upper beams, and extend to 19'-0" above the finished floor.

Both the staff core and public library spaces are clearly rectangular in volume, composed of nine east-west bays, marked by the glu-lam posts. The posts are irregularly spaced, ranging from 6' to 16'-2" on-center. The walls are divided into two horizontal bands that correspond to the height of the structural east-west beams. At the lower portion of the walls, book alcoves are set at 7'-8 ½" in height and project 6' from the building perimeter at alternate bays.

The exterior walls of the alcoves are completely opaque, and clad with wood shingles. Between alcoves, clear-glazed windows rest on low, 24" tall stud-walls clad with shingles. A continuous band of clerestory windows bands the entire perimeter of the main library space. The corners of the public library space are consistently glazed. The four roof monitors align with the location of the alcoves.

The structure, materials, and form of the Magnolia Library successfully promote interaction between the natural and built environment. This is enhanced by the architect's design of the projecting alcoves, which "provide as much shelf space as most library big rooms with the same periphery but which would leave large areas of glass opening to the trees outside." (Q.A. News 6/24/64) Throughout the building, the wood shingles and structural members were left in their natural state to provide a visual contrast, delineating structure from infill.

The Exterior

The adjacency of the two volumes that comprise the Magnolia Library is most clearly seen at the north and south elevations of the building. The public library space to the east and the staff core at the west are joined by the main entry vestibule at the south elevation. This entry is mirrored at the north elevation with full-height glazing. A deep overhang, created by the beams that extend beyond the building perimeter, protects the main entry. Recessed can lights in the soffit illuminate the entry.

Two gardens, separated by a wood-shingled partial-height wall, are located at the north end of the site, one designed for public viewing, and the other for staff. Presently both gardens can be viewed, but not accessed, from the library interior. The gardens are enclosed with a wood fence comprised of tightly spaced 1 x 2 vertical members. Glen Alps' bronze sculpture, "The Activity of Thought," is located on the exterior wall that divides the two adjacent gardens and can be seen from the library interior.

The east elevation is the most public face of the library. The shingled alcoves alternate with areas of glazing at every other bay, with the exception of one bay, which gives the facade an asymmetrical character. Mature vegetation partially obscures the building from view from the street. Painted freestanding wood trellises are placed in front of areas of glazing.

The west elevation mirrors the structural configuration of the east elevation. However, the stud wall infill between posts extends the full height of the elevation, and is clad entirely with stained shingles. Two doors provide exterior access to the basement stair and book processing room, respectively. These are also shingled to minimize interruption of the wall plane. The opacity of the elevation is indicative of the staff and service functions that line the west edge of the building.

The flat roof is lower on the west edge of the building, defined by the placement of the lower pair of east-west beams. The clerestory windows that mark the perimeter of the adjacent public library volume, are placed one bay, or 14', to the east. The west side of the building also faces onto the parking lot and an on-grade area for service vehicle loading.

Interior Features

The floor plan of the Magnolia Library is open and uninterrupted by structure. The book alcoves contain full-height shelving, and low shelves line the perimeter, corresponding to the sill height of the windows. Freestanding shelves, computer stations, and George Nakashima's tables and chairs occupy the center of the floor plan. The building presents a rich complexity of detail within a relatively simple plan, testifying to Kirk's opinion that ". . . fundamentally the interior is more important than the exterior."

The main entry doors lead to a 142 square foot vestibule. The entry vestibule is flanked by the Children's Department to the east and the main circulation desk to the west. The shelving in the book alcoves in the Children's Department does not extend full height, in order to accommodate the library's youngest patrons. Ebba Rapp McLauchlan's sculpture, "Girl Holding Doves," is located at the southeast corner of the Children's Department.

The staff and service areas at the west edge of the library include a 564 square foot workroom and circulation area, a 100 square foot private office for the head librarian, and public restrooms. A 260 square foot staff lounge is located at the northwest corner of the building, where full-height glazing provides views into a private garden. A stair, parallel to the west wall, provides access to the 700 square foot basement, where mechanical and electrical systems are housed.

The ceiling plane is a point of interest in the building interior, filled as it is with exposed bypassing wood beams. The monitors have clerestory glazing at the north, with narrow slots of glazing at the east and west. These monitors, as well as the generous area of glazing at the building perimeter, bring considerable daylight into the building. The placement of glazing and interior beamwork was a conscious effort by Kirk "to give the building the best possible reading light and . . . give the building (interior) variation and relief from the look of flat ceilings." (Queen Anne News 6/24/64)

The overhang at the west elevation is deeper than the overhang at the east, presumably to shade western sun. Natural light in the library is complemented by four, ceiling-mounted can lights set into each of the monitors, and fluorescent strips mounted at the ceiling of each book alcove. Indirect fluorescent strips are also set into the pairs of beams, washing the ceiling plane.

The shelving is wood or steel faced with teak-grain plastic laminate. The floor was originally covered with vinyl asbestos tile, and the ceiling with acoustical ceiling tiles (ACT). The ACT is centered between the beams, with 10±" surround. Presently, both the floor and ceiling finishes appear to be original. Some areas of the beams are stained, indicating an occurrence of water damage.

Modifications to the Magnolia Library have had little impact on the architectural design of the building. Lighting and electrical upgrades were completed in 1983 and 1994. Goforth Gill Architects designed accessibility and Barrier-Free improvements in 1994. As with the other branch libraries and the Central Library, the current interior is more crowded due to the addition of computer technology and its associated furniture and equipment.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

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

Issued: April 3, 2001

Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

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