

Introduction

The Seattle office of Willamette Cultural Resources Associates, Ltd. (WillametteCRA) is located in a two-story office building at 655 South Orcas Street in Seattle’s Georgetown neighborhood (Figure 1). The Georgetown neighborhood is bounded by South Brandon Street on the north, Airport Way South on the east, part of King County International Airport – Boeing Field on the south, and the Duwamish River on the west.



Figure 1: WillametteCRA Seattle office at 655 South Orcas Street (Google Street View, February 2023).

Georgetown

What is now the Georgetown neighborhood of Seattle is part of the ancestral lands of the indigenous Duwamish tribe, who occupied small villages along the Duwamish River up to the mid-nineteenth century. In September 1851, Luther M. Collins (1813–1860) led the first group of European American settlers to the area where they claimed land along the river. Land disputes with the Duwamish soon followed, leading to the poorly conceived Treaty of Point Elliott, the Treaty Wars of 1855–1856, and the relocation of many of the area’s Duwamish people to reservations. However, many insisted on staying, living along the river into the early twentieth century while supporting themselves by picking crops and harvesting native plants and marine life along the Duwamish River. Meanwhile, Julius Horton platted a portion of the original Collins claim as a town in 1871, and the area became known as Duwamish until Horton renamed it Georgetown, after his son, in 1890 (Wilma 2001; Thrush 2017:95–103).

Georgetown was the origin point of Seattle’s first railroad (Seattle & Walla Walla Railroad) in 1874. It briefly became the independent company town of Seattle Brewing and Malting Company (brewer of Rainier Beer) in 1904, as a means of avoiding state prohibition laws, until residents voted to join Seattle in 1910. Between 1913 and 1920, the Duwamish River was dredged and straightened to facilitate industry and global shipping, which gradually destroyed its already struggling ecosystem, forcing the few remaining Duwamish people to leave or die of starvation. The south end of the neighborhood later became the location of Seattle’s first municipal airport (Boeing Field) in 1928 (Wilma 2001; Thrush 2017:95–103). During World War II (WWII), part of the neighborhood became the site of the Duwamish Bend project in 1943: a temporary prefabricated housing development for war workers. It housed over 1,000 families by 1947, many of whom remained until as late as 1954, when the last of its homes were sold or demolished (Wilma 2001; Figure 2). By this point, Georgetown had grown into an industrial center with most of its industries lining the banks of the Duwamish on one side and Airport Way on the other, with residences between them.

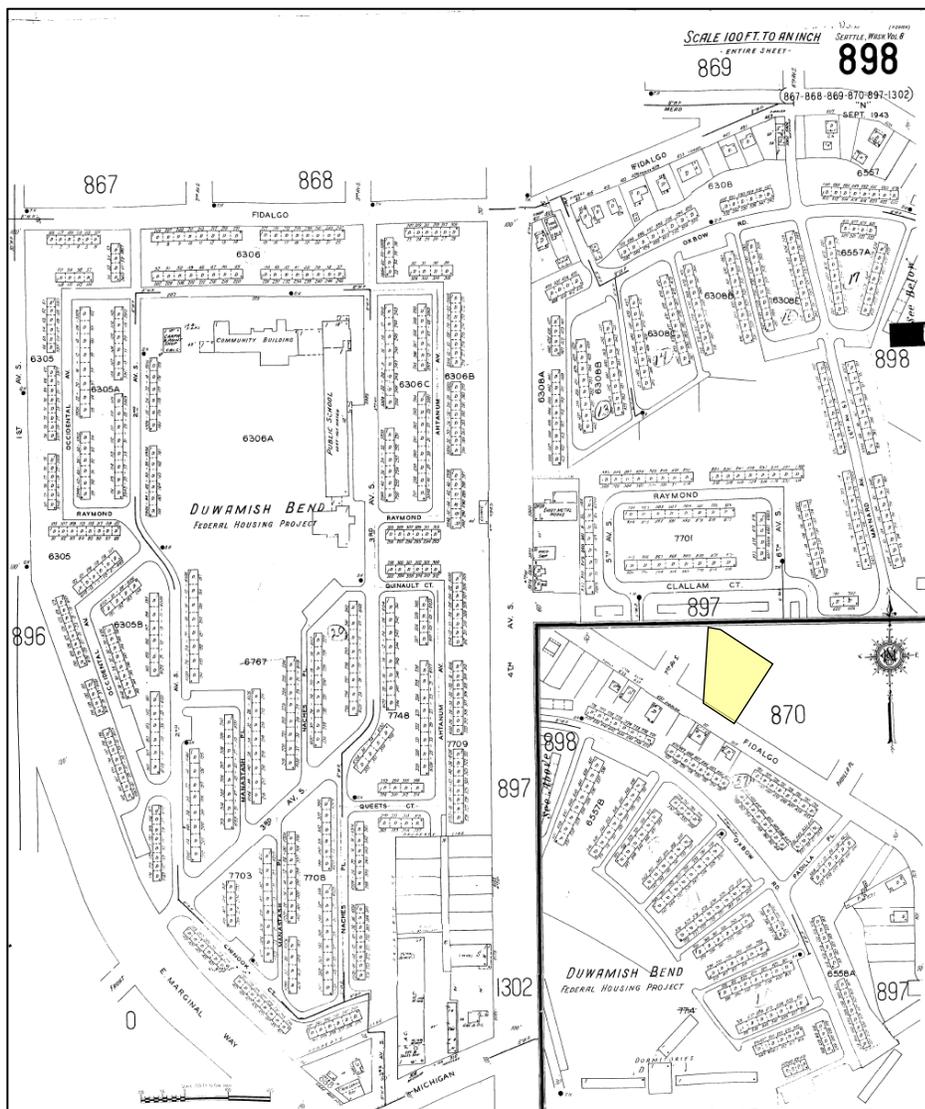


Figure 2. Sheet 898 from the 1929–1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Seattle. The yellow box indicates the approximate location of WillametteCRA Seattle office property (Seattle Public Library).

The Birth of the “Industrial Park” and Georgetown’s Post-War Industrial Development

Georgetown’s industrial belts began expanding inward as early as 1950 (King County Department of Assessments 2025). However, large-scale development did not begin until the early 1960s (Seattle Times 1961:1). It was the culmination of, by then, a decade-long effort to promote industrial development through the concept known as the “industrial park.” Rooted in the practice of industrial dispersal in Europe during WWII to maintain industrial activity in the event of a nuclear attack, the concept of the industrial park was first developed by the Issaquah Chamber of Commerce around 1950. It consists of large, typically suburban, multi-acre campuses of low-rise office and warehouse buildings that occupy a maximum of 35% of their tax lots, with the remainder of the land devoted to parking lots and generous landscaping, divided by often winding, tree-lined streets (McDonald 1951:4; Fussell 1953:4).

The Seattle and King County Planning Commissions and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce subsequently formalized the concept in 1951 for national deployment by the National Security Resources Board (McDonald 1951:4; Fussell 1953:4). The first to be built in the greater Seattle area was the 100-acre East Side Industrial Park, started in 1956 at Preston, Washington, east of Issaquah (Seattle Times 1956:36). More industrial parks followed, including the 16-acre Stimson Industrial Park, the first within Seattle city limits, in 1960 (Seattle Times Puget Sound Empire Trade and Industry Edition 1957:8; Staples 1957; Seattle Times 1957–1960). Meanwhile, the gradual auction of Georgetown’s Duwamish Bend war housing project (its land and houses) and studies for the neighborhood’s industrial development began in 1953 (Seattle Times 1953). A few years later, Seattle Chamber of Commerce president Joseph E. Gandy identified “industrial expansion” as “Seattle’s greatest need” and called for the “establishment of a fully integrated industrial park under one management” (Gandy 1956). The first to answer this call in Georgetown was a group known as Oxbox Associates, which acquired approximately 25 acres south of the WillametteCRA Seattle office in 1960 and built its first building there in 1962.

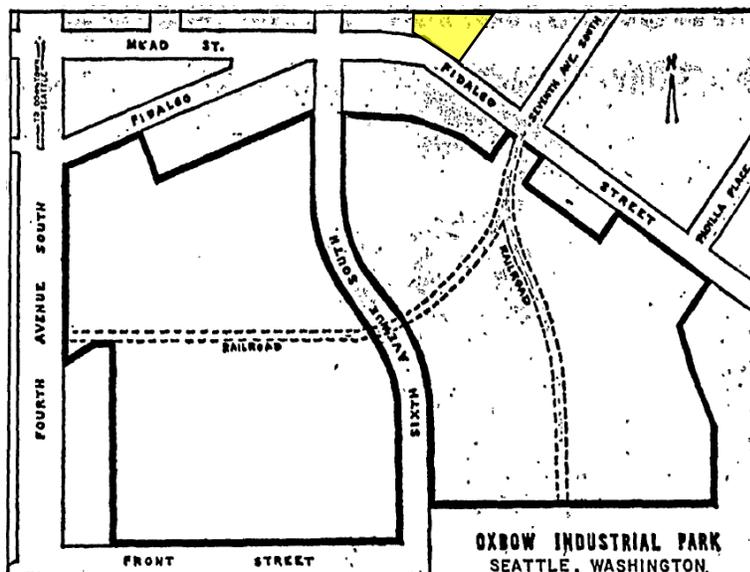


Figure 3. Drawing of the Oxbow Industrial Park boundaries with part of the WillametteCRA office property marked with the yellow box (Seattle Times 1961:1 and 30).

Not to be outdone or miss an opportunity to push himself, local real estate developer Jack Benaroya (1921–2012) created and perfected his own system for “designing, developing, and building well-landscaped, architecturally pleasing ‘business parks’” as he initially called them (Chelsey 2006). He started by purchasing a 7-acre tract adjacent to Oxbow on the south for his own Michigan Street Business Park in December 1962 (Seattle Times 1962:22). Succeeding in this endeavor, Benaroya then purchased the still-incomplete Oxbow Industrial Park and other adjacent properties and combined them under a new name of “Benaroya Industrial Park” in 1965 (Staples 1965). After completing his expanded industrial park, Benaroya looked north of Fidalgo Street for additional expansion and purchased the block between 6th and 7th Avenues and Orcas Street in early 1968. A year later, his company announced plans to construct one warehouse and two office buildings there (King County Assessor 1937; Seattle Times 1969:19).

WillametteCRA Seattle Office

The WillametteCRA Seattle office is situated near the center of Block 25 of Commercial Street Steam Motor Addition and Block 3 of Georgetown Riverfront Addition within the SW¼ of Section 20, Township 24 North, Range 4 East, Willamette Meridian (Figures 4 and 5). This land was part of the original 157.18-acre donation land claim of Eli B. Maple (1831–1911; Veith 2009:17; Figure 6). Eli Maple was the son of Jacob Maple (1798–1884), a member of the Collins Party of 1851 (Lange 2000). Eli Maple arrived in October 1852 and filed his father’s claim with the General Land Office, receiving the patent in 1871 (Veith 2009:17). The Maples farmed here until 1888 (Veith 2009:17). In 1889, a group of people platted part of the farm as the Commercial Street Steam Motor addition, which includes the north half of the WillametteCRA Seattle office property. Another group platted the southern half of the property as part of the Georgetown Riverfront Addition in 1903 (King County Archives 1888 and 1903).



Figure 4. Commercial Street Steam Motor Addition plat map, March 21, 1889. Yellow box marks the approximate boundaries of the WillametteCRA Seattle office property (King County Archives).

These four would remain until 1968 (Figure 7). That year, Benaroya assigned one of his staff architects, Euan E. Loiseau (1927–2022), to design the warehouse and two office buildings that would replace them. He also hired structural engineer John H. Stevenson (1886–1968) to assist Loiseau in the more technical aspects (The Benaroya Company 1968; Seattle Times 1968:89; Columbia Basin Herald 2022).

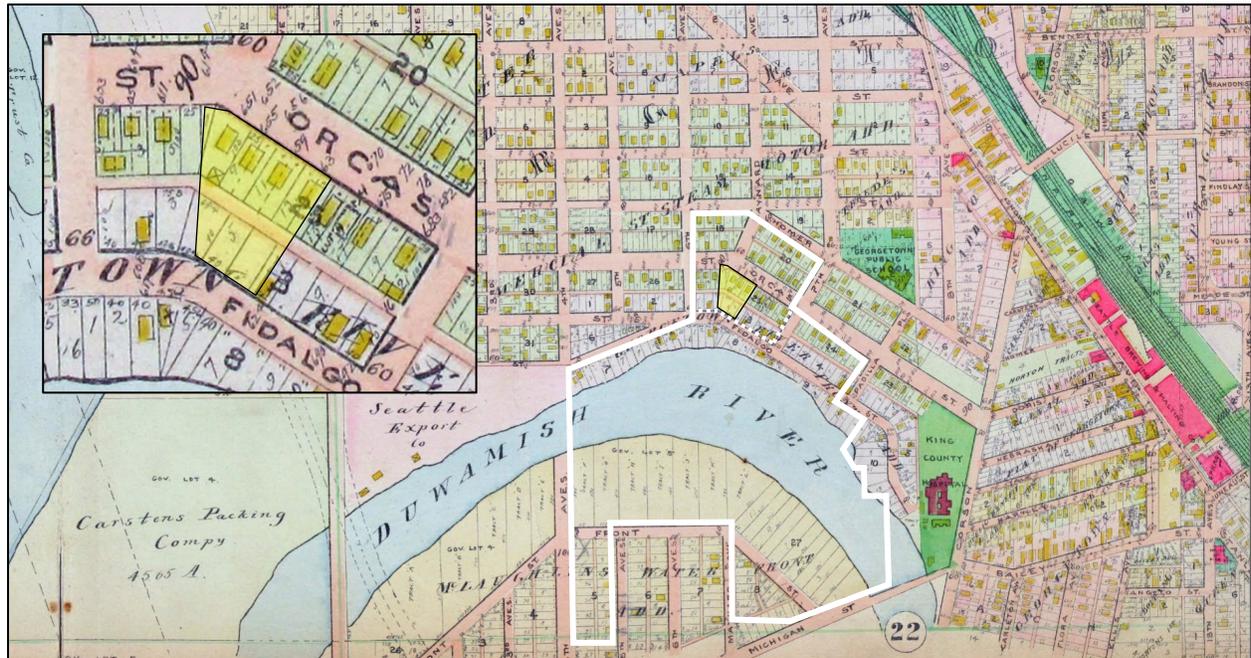
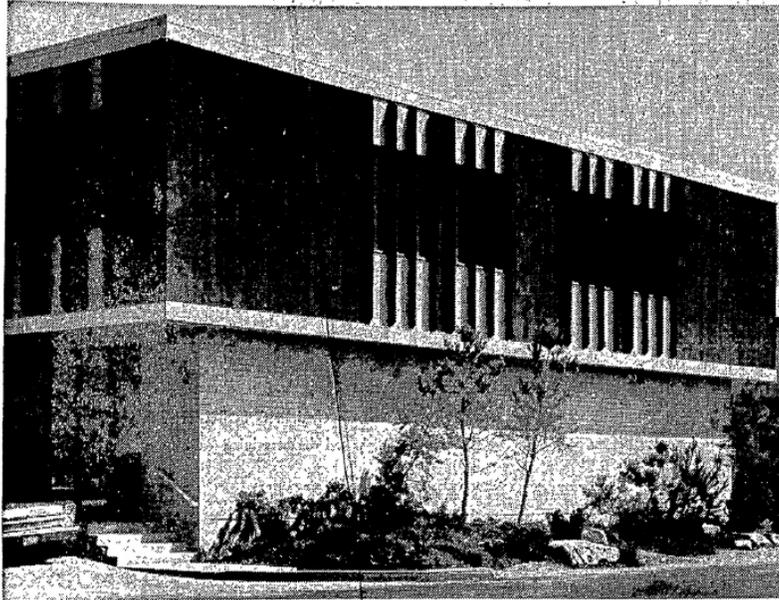


Figure 6. Cropped section of plate 29 of the 1912 Baist Real Estate map of Seattle. Yellowish rectangles are wood frame construction (most or entirely, single-family homes). The bright yellow polygon marks the approximate boundaries of the WillametteCRA Seattle office property. The white lines approximate the maximum extent of the Benaroya Industrial Park, and the dotted line marks the southern boundary of Orcas Business Park (Pauldorpat.com).

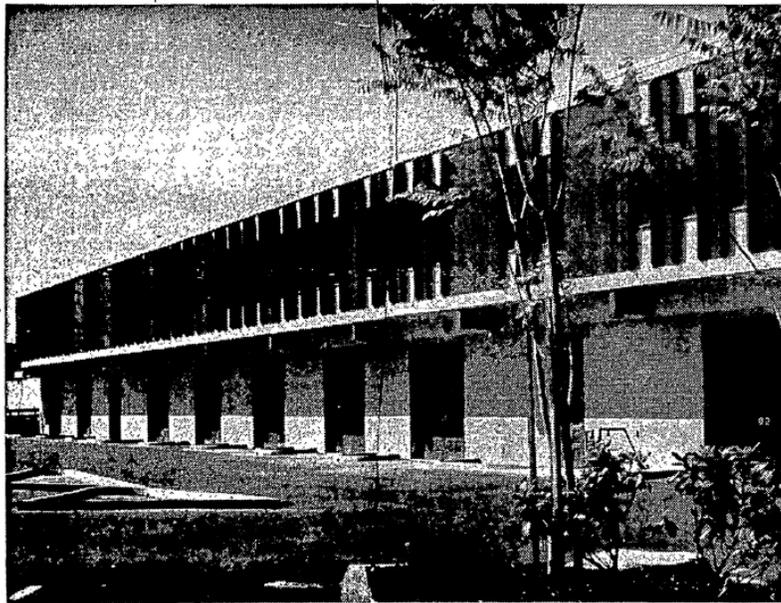
Loiseau was a new employee who had designed a massive office building for Boeing at Paine Field a few months prior (Seattle Times 1967:11 and C1). Stevenson, on the other hand, was legendary. His engineering feats included iconic buildings such as Seattle’s Orpheum Theater, the Frederick and Nelson building, the Seventh Avenue Theater, and the Northern Life Tower (now Seattle Tower). When asked whether there was anything unusual about the Orpheum during its demolition in 1967, Stevenson replied, “nothing... It was just a damned well-built building” (Evans 1967). Although he lived to witness the Orpheum’s demise firsthand, he died a year before his and Loiseau’s work for Benaroya was completed in 1969 (Figure 7 and 8).

BENAROYA INDUSTRIAL PARK

15 Firms Move Into New Home



LANDSCAPING ENHANCES ATTRACTIVENESS OF NEW INDUSTRIAL PARK



WOODEN DOORS ON SIDE OF BUILDING OPEN FOR TRUCKS

Fifteen diversified firms have taken occupancy in two newly-completed buildings in Benaroya Industrial Park, Seattle.

Design and construction was by Jack A. Benaroya Co., the park's developer.

Located at S. Fidalgo and 6th Ave. S., the buildings are of two-story, cantilevered design. Each containing 23,000 square feet.

The first levels are of light-beige brick with upper-level exteriors of rough-sawn cedar.

Lower floors are adaptable to any combination of office, showroom or light-storage needs.

Second floors contain air-conditioned office space finished with wall-to-wall carpeting, drapes, and acoustical ceilings with recessed, fluorescent light fixtures.

Each building has a gracious entry lobby with an interior garden, floating staircase, and 18-foot chandelier. Handcrafted, stained-wood doors enhance the entries.

A paved, off-street parking area for tenants accommodates 130 automobiles.

Planted greenbelts enhance the parklike atmosphere maintained throughout the Benaroya development: Over 30 mature trees, some 20 feet tall, were planted on the grounds.

Benaroya Industrial Park is now expanded to 45 acres. Improvement includes 925,000 square feet of office, warehouse and light-manufacturing space. A total of 102 local and national companies occupy the park.

Tenants who have opened offices in the buildings are Northwest Investment Management, Inc.; Marine and Industrial, Inc.; C. P. Marker; Bass Employment Service; Northwest Acceptance Corp.; and S. S. Mullen, Inc.

Sales and storage quarters are occupied by Whiz Print Copy Center; Slim-Gym of Seattle; Alaska West Express; Chain Saws Northwest; Electro Rents; Educational Aids and Services Co.; McNamara Business Machines; Brennan-Hamilton Corp.; and Nelson Stud Welding.

Smaller Cities In HUD Book

Information and technical assistance services now being provided by States to communities under 100,000 are covered in detail in a publication released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Entitled State Urban Information and Technical

Figure 7. Leasing announcement for 655 South Orcas Street and its sister buildings to the east and west (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, October 4, 1969).



Figure 8. King County Assessor’s photograph of 655 South Orcas Street during construction and later completed in June 1969, according to permit records (Washington State Archives, April 30, 1969).

The two-story office building at 655 South Orcas Street was constructed of tilt-up concrete, faced with light brown clay block brick at ground level, below a cantilevered 2x4 double wood frame faced with rough-sawn cedar (King County Assessor, 1969). While various tenants came and went, making various modifications to the building, Benaroya went on to become “the largest developer of industrial real estate in the Pacific Northwest, with properties covering more than eight million square feet” by the early 1980s. In 1984, he sold his entire real estate portfolio, including the subject property, for \$315 million (worth nearly \$1 billion today). His philanthropic pursuits thereafter include donating \$15 million to the Seattle Symphony in 1993 for a new performance hall that now bears his name (Chesley 2006).

The earliest known tenant to occupy suite 220 was Western Union, which occupied suites 200 through 230 between 1973 and 1990 (R.L. Polk and Company 1973–1990). A non-profit organization named Treehouse, founded in 1990 and focused on offering “underprivileged children, including abused and foster children, recreational and social opportunities to improve self-esteem,” occupied suite 220 between ca. 1995 and 2002 (Gelernter 1995; Cole Information Services 2002). During Treehouse’s tenancy, Orcas Business Park LLC purchased the property (King County Department of Assessments 2025). WillametteCRA has occupied Suite 220 since 2019. The original WillametteCRA Seattle office was established at 650 South Orcas Street in 2015. 650 South Orcas Street is an identical building constructed by The Benaroya Company in 1970 (King County Assessor 1970).



Figure 9. King County Assessor's photograph of 650 South Orcas Street, (Washington State Archives, November 12, 1970).

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