Cover images: 1904 Sanborn legend map. 1903 corner view of Hotel Laube.
Image courtesy of the Washington State Library.
This report was commissioned by the City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department.

Funding was provided through a Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation Certified Local Government Grant.

August, 2012
Unless otherwise noted, all historic photographs in this report are provided courtesy of the Whatcom Museum Photo Archives, 201 Prospect Street. Located in the Syre Education Center (former fire station next to Old City Hall) the Whatcom Museum Photo Archives are open to the public between 1:00 - 5:00 pm Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; and by appointment at other times.

Prints of historic photographs can be purchased through the Photo Archives -- for more information contact Jeff Jewell, Photo Archivist at jjjewell@cob.org or (360) 778-8952.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February, 2012 Artifacts Consulting, Inc. (Artifacts) undertook a reconnaissance-level historic resource survey and inventory (the Project) of 286 properties generally located in the Central Business District (CBD) in Bellingham. The survey area included the central area of the CBD Neighborhood, and small portions of the Sehome and Sunnyland Neighborhoods. The Project was sponsored by the City of Bellingham’s Planning and Community Development Department, and addresses only above-grade, built environment historic properties.

The Project forwards the City's goal of establishing a comprehensive inventory within Bellingham’s CBD of properties built before 1963. The Project also provides an important planning tool for the City of Bellingham, as well as the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). All survey and inventory information resides in the Washington State Historic Property Inventory (HPI) database, accessible to the public via the Washington Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Data (WISAARD) web portal. Findings and recommendations resulting from the Project are summarized in the report, as well as determinations of eligibility for buildings that do not meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but would be eligible for the local Bellingham Register of Historic Places. Inventory information is also available via the City of Bellingham’s Geographic Information System (GIS) at the Planning and Community Development Department.

All survey work, completion of inventory forms, and preparation of the Survey & Inventory Report followed the guidelines in the “Historic Property Inventory Guide and Database Use Manual” and the “Washington State Standards for Cultural Resource Reporting” published by DAHP.
PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT BOUNDARIES

The Project area lies within the CBD Neighborhood located within the City of Bellingham in Whatcom County, Washington. The CBD is generally described as Bellingham’s downtown core and is bounded to the west by Whatcom Creek and the Lettered Streets Neighborhood, to the north by Whatcom Creek and the Sunnyland Neighborhood, to the east by the York and Sehome Neighborhoods, and to the south by Bellingham Bay. The CBD also includes a small portion of industrial land west of Cornwall Avenue along the Whatcom Creek Waterway and Bellingham Bay. Within the CBD, the project area covered 211 acres, with over 450 parcels, a building on most parcels. A small commercial portion of the Sehome Neighborhood along East Holly Street, to the intersection with Ellis Street was also included in the project area (see Map 1: Project Area).

Figure 2. View of the intersection of Magnolia and Commercial Streets in downtown Bellingham in the early 1950’s. The building in the foreground at left is the current Crown Plaza building. The Sehome Arboretum can be seen in the background.
PROJECT FUNDING

The Bellingham Central Business District Survey & Inventory Project was financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, administered by DAHP and the City of Bellingham. The contents and opinions within do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, DAHP, or the City of Bellingham. Regulations of the Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

PROJECT TEAM

Artifacts personnel working on the Project included Michael Sullivan, Principal-in-Charge; Spencer Howard, Partner and Project Manager; Susan Johnson, Associate; and Katie Chase, Associate. All team members hold master’s degrees in history and/or historic preservation and exceed the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards for History and Architectural History full-time work experience.

The City's Project team included Katie Franks, Project Manager, and Kate Newell, GIS Analyst, both with the Planning and Community Development Department. Jeff Jewell, Photo Archivist with the Whatcom Museum Photo Archives, provided valuable photograph access, use, guidance and frequent assistance on questions pertaining to the history, development, and the historic buildings of Bellingham. Ruth Steel, Photo Archivist for the Center For Pacific Northwest Studies, provided digital photograph access and use.

Volunteers engaged in the Project provided invaluable assistance in developing a depth of background for properties that would not have been obtainable otherwise. Many thanks to the Project volunteers, including: Jim Talbot, Historic Preservation Commissioner; Gayle Helgoe, Librarian; Ruth Baacke, Librarian; Kolby LaBree, Historic Research Specialist; and Carolyn Lopit, Intern.
PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the Project is to identify properties and districts eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Washington State Heritage Register (WHR) and/or the City of Bellingham’s Register of Historic Places (BRHP). In doing this, the Project fulfills one of the City’s goals as a Certified Local Government (CLG), as well as City Council Legacy #4 Sense of Place: preserve historic & cultural resources.

A major objective of the Project is to compile information that can be used by property owners, City of Bellingham Departments, Bellingham Historic Preservation Commission, the Washington State DAHP, as well as the general public for planning, research, interpretation, and promotion. The survey provides a baseline of existing historic properties and their character-defining features that can be used to inform design review, provide public access to historical information and photographs via City and State online databases, and identify properties potentially eligible for economic incentives due to their historic register eligibility.

PREVIOUS SURVEYS

The Project built upon previous historical research completed within Bellingham’s CBD. Previous surveys and research projects referenced in this inventory project include the following:

The Architectural Resource Overview dates from 1985 and includes information compiled during a 1980 study conducted jointly by the Whatcom County Historic Preservation Office and the Whatcom County Architects Association. The Architectural Resource Overview provides a brief summary of the historical development of the CBD, divides it into five focus areas, and defines the character of each of these areas.

Historic Downtown Buildings, Bellingham, Washington
This is a collection of student reports created during an Anthropology 428 class taught by Dr. Sarah K. Campbell in Spring 2003 at Western Washington University. The compilation includes the following: the B. B. Jones Building; Bellingham Hotel, Betschart Building, Bloedel Donovan Headquarters, Cabin Tavern, Clover Block, Herald Building, Public Comfort Station, and the Windsor Building. Student papers from a Spring 2002 Anthropology 428/528 class, also taught by Dr. Campbell, are appended to the “Historic Downtown Buildings, Bellingham, Washington.” These appendices include the following buildings: the Scottish Rites Temple, Maple Block, Great Northern Railroad Freight Depot, Waterfront Tavern, Stegner Hotel, Holly-Bay-Prospect Building, Pace’s New and Used, the Red Front Building, and the old YMCA building.

The 2003 Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) contains a concentration of commercial buildings located in Bellingham's CBD, the core-commercial area of what was historically known as the town of New Whatcom, which was formed through the consolidation of the towns of Whatcom and Sehome. The period of significance (1882-1915) includes two historic contexts that define Bellingham’s commercial development within the CBD: Railroad Speculation and its Effect on the Early Towns of Bellingham, 1882 - 1900; and
Consolidation and Commercial Growth of Bellingham’s Central Business District, 1900 - 1915. As of 2012, six commercial properties have been listed to the NRHP under this MPD.

Individually-listed National Register of Historic Places Properties
Information from National Register nominations for the 18 buildings within the CBD individually listed to the NRHP was used to help develop the historic context for the survey.

A Maritime Resource Survey for Washington’s Saltwater Shores
The Maritime Resource Survey for Washington’s Saltwater Shores was completed in June 2011 by Artifacts Consulting, Inc., and addressed above-grade, built environment properties related to the maritime character of Washington State. The boundaries for this survey and inventory project stretched north and south from the United States - Canadian border down through Grays Harbor County in the south, encompassing the saltwater shores of the Salish Sea, Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Pacific Coast. Bellingham, with its waterfront location, fell within the project boundaries, and a number of historic resources within the city and the CBD were surveyed and inventoried as part of the project.

HPI Upload
In 2011-2012 Artifacts Consulting, Inc. uploaded assessor property data to the DAHP’s online HPI database for buildings built in or before 1969 within Certified Local Governments, the goal being to establish a baseline data set of existing buildings. For the City of Bellingham this included, as available, historic Whatcom County assessor photographs and forms.

Existing HPI Forms
In addition to the HPI forms generated through the 2011-2012 HPI Upload, Several of the properties documented through Bellingham Central Business District Survey & Inventory Project had existing forms in the HPI (including forms created through compliance review, by historical societies, and Legacy forms – scanned inventory sheets completed prior to 2000). Also, there are forms within this survey on buildings that have been demolished. Artifacts merged all identifiable forms for the same building into one form via HPI.
RESEARCH DESIGN

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Methodology for the project consisted of field work and photography, property and context research, writing and data analysis, and data entry.

Artifacts integrated previously completed research and survey information into this survey and ensured that property location information utilized in the HPI database aligned with the most current City of Bellingham geographic information system (GIS) data. City staff shared base parcel layers for the survey area along with a point layer of alternative addresses associated with each parcel. Artifacts consolidated this information into one shapefile layer, which provided the base address, legal description, acreage, and owner information for each parcel. Vacant parcels and parking lots were identified prior to field work. Grid maps provided by City staff were used to generate field maps for the survey area. Artifacts developed a field form customized to the resource types expected within the survey area.

Artifacts staff conducted field survey work on the 16th and 17th of February, 2012, staff digitally photographing all buildings within the survey area and keying photographs to the survey maps. Field work informed where parcels needed to be split (in some cases two or more buildings were located within a single parcel). Successive parcels each received a sequential letter after the parcel number (e.g., Parcel NumberA and Parcel NumberB). Addresses were also updated, based on building numbers observed in the field. Potentially contemporary buildings (built in or after 1963) were identified in the field, followed by archival research to confirm dates of construction. All forms were tracked based on the addresses assigned in the survey maps.
As part of the survey, photographs were taken from the right-of-way at various perspectives, to provide a "snapshot in time".

Figures 7 & 8. As part of the survey, photographs were taken from the right-of-way at various perspectives, to provide a "snapshot in time".

All photographs were renamed using the City of Bellingham’s formatting protocol (STREETNAME_STREETTYPE_STREETDIRECTION_HOUSENUMBER). For example: 524 S STATE ST is STATE_ST_S_0524. Additional photographs of the same property add a suffix for additional views. For example: STATE_ST_S_0524A.

Data analysis utilized GIS to project survey findings and recommendations on eligibility. Artifacts exported the survey data from HPI, imported the tables into a file geo database and utilized the tax parcel number to join the survey data from HPI to the City’s GIS parcel data. Two additional data sets were tracked exclusively in GIS, since they could not be recorded in HPI:

Properties not eligible for the NRHP, yet potentially eligible for listing on the BRHP. (Properties eligible for the NRHP were considered to be eligible for both the local BRHP and WHR.)

Commercial buildings constructed after 1916 potentially eligible for the NRHP under the Commercial Properties MPD, if the MPD period of significance was extended beyond 1916.

Previous surveys, individual property NRHP nominations, and the Commercial Properties MPD provided a foundation for the development of the historic context statement. Artifacts staff conducted additional research at the Washington State Library archives. Volunteers provided additional research for the survey using City Polk Directories and other materials at the Whatcom Museum Photo Archives.
HISTORIC CONTEXT

The following information is arranged chronologically and describes significant historic patterns, events, and themes that shaped the character and building types of Bellingham’s Central Business District (CBD). Some events directly influenced the character of the CBD’s built environment, while others had indirect but significant effects. This context builds upon the 2003 National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) MPD: Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882-1915, which identified two associated historic contexts:

**Railroad Speculation and its Effect on the Early Towns of Bellingham, 1882-1900**

**Consolidation and Commercial Growth of Bellingham’s Central Business District, 1900-1915**

The City of Bellingham is located in northwest Washington State, along Bellingham Bay in Whatcom County. The earliest inhabitants of the area were the Lummi, Semiahmoo and Nooksack tribes. The Spanish explorer Francisco Eliza first sailed to the area in 1791. He mapped and named the bay the Seno de Gaston (Gulf of Gaston). The following year, other Spanish explorers called it the Bahia de Gaston (Bay of Gaston). However, the name given by Britain’s Capt. George Vancouver and his crew in 1792 is the one which is now commonly used, Bellingham Bay. The Spanish names for other nearby features, such as the San Juan Islands, remain intact. The U.S. Exploring Expedition of the 1840s improved on the charts and maps created by their predecessors and added another set of geographic place names. The U.S. expedition also awakened American interest in the natural resources of the territory, which remained largely untouched by foreign interests except for the fur trade.

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1. E.S. MEANY, ORIGIN OF WASHINGTON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES, AS CITED IN A HISTORY OF BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON (BELLINGHAM: THE ARGONAUT PRESS, 1926), 5-6.
Euro-American settlement began in earnest in 1852, shortly before the 1853 formation of Washington Territory. In 1852-1853, Henry Roeder and Russell Peabody sought and claimed a location for a water-powered lumber mill at the base of Whatcom Creek’s waterfall.² The two men filed land claims along both sides of the creek. The 1883 plats for their two parcels, along with the plat for the town of New Whatcom, set down the organization and location of other land parcels and streets (including Cornwall and Railroad Avenues) that exist today in the CBD. A series of triangular blocks and jogged roadways in the area of Champion Street mark this boundary between the two plats.³

Four independent settlements developed along Bellingham Bay within the city’s current boundaries – Fairhaven, Bellingham, Whatcom, and Sehome (see map of original towns, at right). The first two incorporated in 1889 (Fairhaven and Bellingham), under the name Fairhaven. Sehome re-incorporated as New Whatcom and then joined with Whatcom in 1891, under the name New Whatcom (later dropping the “New”). In 1903, Fairhaven and Whatcom consolidated to become the City of Bellingham.⁴

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² THE PEABODY/ROEDER LAND CLAIMS MAKE UP PART OF TODAY’S MARITIME HERITAGE PARK.

During the 1850s and 1860s the four original towns grew, capitalizing on local resources such as timber, fish, coal, gold, and quarried stone. Excitement over initial entrepreneurial successes and the ready access to inexpensive water transportation translated to boom and bust growth patterns for the towns. Gold mining along the Fraser River in 1858 brought prospectors to the area, of both the investment capital and pick axe types, but this growth spurt was short-lived. The national railroad expansion of the 1870s raised hopes that the settlements on Bellingham Bay might become an important terminus, only to disappoint. Investors for local industrial growth also disappeared with a national economic depression in 1873. Not until 1882 did the towns begin to gain a solid foothold and grow sustainably. Logging and fishing enterprises expanded on the waterfront, and railroad dreams were revisited.  

*Figure 12. Map illustrating the evolution of the four original towns and their consolidation over time, which created the City of Bellingham in 1904.*

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4 1907 BELLINGHAM CITY DIRECTORY, AS CITED IN A HISTORY OF BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON (BELLINGHAM: THE ARGONAUT PRESS, 1926), 5.

Within the current CBD neighborhood, no known buildings from the 1850s-1870s survive, due to their temporary construction type, locations, and replacement over time. With the shift in 1882 came a more permanent identity for the Bellingham Bay settlements, resulting in higher quality buildings by the 1890s. Notable examples listed and/or recommended for NRHP listing include the 1890 Oakland Block (401 West Champion Street), the 1890 B. B. Jones Building (932 North State Street, pictured below), and the 1913 Leopold Hotel (1224 Cornwall Avenue). These are masonry buildings of two or more stories, executed in commercial architectural styles characteristic of nationwide design trends during the 1890s.

Figure 13. The B. B. Jones Block at 932 Elk Street (today's North State Street) was built in 1890 in the Victorian style, with a storefront on the first floor and residences on the second floor. A turret above the main entry was capped with a large onion dome (since removed). Once promoted as one of the city's architectural attractions, in 1891 the U. S. Customs Office was located in the ground floor of the building and Mr. Jones’ son William resided upstairs.

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6 BELLINGHAM'S PICKETT HOUSE AND THE TERRITORIAL COURTHOUSE IN THE LETTERED STREETS NEIGHBORHOOD ARE TWO RARE EXAMPLES FROM THIS EARLY PERIOD.
From 1882 through 1891, the promise of railroads encouraged investment and speculation throughout Whatcom County, and marked the beginning of concerted efforts to exploit the natural resources of the region. The dream of having a western transcontinental terminus again surfaced as regional railroad development restarted. In the mid-1880s, town and property claim plats were filed, including one for New Whatcom in 1883. Utilities such as water, gas and electricity started around this time for the area, and local rail networks were planned. Between 1888 and 1891, the four original towns on the bay competed for business interests. Growth of the town-sites increased, especially with the founding of several regional railroad lines, including the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia (BB and BC), the Bellingham Bay and Eastern (BB and E), and the Fairhaven and Southern. All these lines would soon be purchased by three of the major transcontinental rail lines – the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, the Northern Pacific, and the Great Northern – thus connecting Bellingham Bay’s settlements with the rest of the country and Canada.


*Figure 14.* 1890s view looking southwest down Elk Street (today's State Street). Note the planked sidewalks and street.
Besides railroad links, the CBD benefitted greatly from its water connections. By 1896, Bellingham’s harbor participated in both coastal and international shipping, with steam and sailing vessels alike. The year’s total combined import and export tonnage reached 43,131 with a value of $656,463. Just four years later, volumes jumped by 500-percent to exceed 233,000 tons with a valuation in excess of $13 million. The shipping continued to increase through 1906, growing another 25-percent in combined rail and ship totals. This increase stemmed in part from expansion of industrial and commercial activities along the bay, including the central waterfront at the mouth of Whatcom Creek, and by extension of the CBD. As part of this growth the federal government invested $60,000 with private interests contributing another $20,000 to dredge a half mile long channel, 400 feet wide and twelve feet deep at low tide creating the Whatcom Waterway at the mouth of Whatcom Creek. With this improved shipping connection, warehouses, canneries, mills, and industrial properties soon built up the waterfront areas.

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9 LOTTIE ROEDER ROTH, HISTORY OF WHATCOM COUNTY, VOL. 1 (SEATTLE: PIONEER HISTORICAL PUBLISHING CO., 1926), 619-620.
10 1907 CITY BROCHURE, IN VERTICAL FILES OF WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY.
11 1907 CITY BROCHURE, IN VERTICAL FILES OF WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY.
Public transportation within the CBD grew as its role as a regional commercial center expanded. Streetcar lines opened on Elk Street (now known as State Street) in 1891 and the first North Garden line began in 1892, comprising the first major mass transit efforts within the CBD. The North Garden line connected downtown with the Normal School (now Western Washington University), allowing students to live downtown and commute to school. The movement of freight by rail also continued to increase and helped shape the CBD. Industrial and commercial buildings sprang up alongside the main track of the BB and BC rail line down Railroad Avenue, along West Holly Street (which had access to the waterfront), and along the mainline of the Great Northern Railway on Roeder Avenue (which becomes West

Figure 17. Map of historic streetcar routes serving downtown Bellingham and beyond in the late 1900s and early 20th century.

Figure 18. The Bellingham freight and passenger train depot in the early 1900s on Railroad Avenue.

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Chestnut Street). Commercial retail and warehouse buildings utilized this waterfront and rail access to take full advantage of shipping raw and finished materials to and from market. A spur track for the Northern Pacific Railroad ran down the alley between North State Street and Railroad Avenue, servicing the loading bays on the back side of commercial buildings that fronted North State Street. As a result of these rail links, Railroad Avenue in particular has historically been home to machinery shops, repair shops, grocery warehouses, agricultural supply companies, and many other manufacturing and commercial enterprises.

By at least 1904, the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company’s Electric Light Plant stood at the northern, industrial end of the CBD at the point where the parallel routes through the CBD of the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul on the west and the Northern Pacific Railroad line to the east diverged. This plant (later to become the Puget Sound Power and Light Company’s facility) provided power to the city’s streetcars. Industrial operations such as lumber yards, flouring mills and bottling and cold storage facilities dominated the northern edge of the CBD along York Street, as it provided direct access to rail lines for moving products.

13 Ibid., Sheet 40.
Commercial activity flourished within the CBD area that was generally bounded by Bellingham Bay to the west, Whatcom Creek (and York Street) along the north and North State Street to the east. Industries, retail and wholesale businesses, financial institutions, restaurants, hotels and rooming houses, and professional offices established themselves in the CBD within easy access to the surrounding industrial and shipping activities. By 1904, the downtown’s first department store, The Fair Store, had opened on Grand Avenue (since demolished). The First National Bank of Bellingham and Bellingham National Bank both organized and received national charters in 1904 and opened in the CBD. The Bellingham National Bank first opened in the Clover Block (203 West Holly Street) before moving to the Bellingham National Bank Building (101-11 East Holly Street). A third bank, Northwestern National, opened in the Hannah Block at 211-13 East Holly Street in March, 1908 (since demolished), moving that same year to the Mason Building (since demolished, previously at southwest corner of Railroad Avenue and East Holly Street). In 1907, downtown Bellingham had almost 40 lumber product mills, plus salmon canneries, box factories, sash and door factories, boiler and engine factories, and more, including soda, cigar, garment, and candy factories. The city also had telephone systems and three daily newspapers (Reveille, Herald and American), plus a German weekly, a Swedish weekly, and other news publications.\footnote{15
1907 CITY BROCHURE, IN VERTICAL FILES OF WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure21.png}
\caption{Intersection of Bay, Holly and Prospect Streets in 1913. The Fair Department Store was demolished and replaced with the now historic Cissna Apartments (currently known as the Mount Baker Apartments -- see Figure 28 on page 22).}
\end{figure}

\footnote{14 KEITH MURRAY, THE STORY OF BANKING IN WHATCOM COUNTY (1955), 25-28.}
Between 1900 and 1910, construction boomed along North State and East and West Holly Streets. Large downtown buildings along these streets built during that decade include the Morse Hardware Building (1027-29 North State Street), Exchange Building (now the YMCA, 1248-60 North State Street), Daylight Building (1201-13 North State Street), Hotel Laube (1226 North State Street), Windsor Hotel (1220-24 North State Street), Clover Block (201 West Holly Street), Scottish Rites/Masonic Temple (1101 North State Street), the Maple Block (1051-55 North State Street), just to name a few. Many of these had retail space on the ground floor with hotel rooms, professional offices, or other business services occupying the upper floors. At that time, traveling salesmen frequented the State Street corridor, using rooms in the hotels to display products. Local residents also visited North State and East and West Holly Streets for matters of business, health care, or other services.\textsuperscript{16}

By 1914, Bellingham’s urban identity had solidified after the completion of a major railroad terminal, a federal building (100-04 West Magnolia Street), and an expanded streetcar system. World War I (1914-1918) brought increased production in Bellingham’s mills, canneries, and other industries to supply the war. With

\textsuperscript{16} FELBER, 9-10.
the increasing density of the CBD (evidenced by the hotels, apartments and office buildings), combined with factories, mills and other industrial operations within or at the fringes of the CBD, Bellingham’s fire department served a vital role. When the former towns of Fairhaven and Whatcom consolidated to form the City of Bellingham in 1904, the respective fire departments also combined yet remained a volunteer force. In 1905, the city began paying the fire department personnel, with twelve men employed. Growth prompted construction of the central fire house (since demolished) adjacent to the 1892 City Hall (now the Whatcom Museum, 121 Prospect Street). Numbers increased to fifteen between 1908 and 1918. In 1918, the department started to steadily increase, and by 1926 consisted of 37 men. The growth of the fire department between 1918 and 1926 presumably happened at least in part because of the damage and fear incurred by some of the city’s worst fire disasters. In April, 1924, the B. B. Furniture Company Building (1311-19 Bay Street) caught fire, damaging the roof and the elevator shaft. A large waterfront fire occurred on September 30, 1924, destroying the Bloedel-Donovan box factory and threatening the industrial properties to the north. Another large fire struck on September 22, 1925, damaging the E. K. Wood Lumber Company’s mill. The 1925 fire was the largest to date in the city’s history, in terms of losses. The Daylight Building’s 1926 and 1928 fires also caused major interior damage. These fires prompted the modernization and expansion of the fire department’s equipment and capabilities. In 1925, citizens of Bellingham voted for a new headquarters building to be constructed, “replacing the old central structure adjoining the city hall, and one additional sub-station.” Both new buildings (the central station and Fairhaven Station No. 2) were finished by the end of 1927. Engine House No. 1 (201 Prospect Street) replaced the old fire house, adjacent to the Old City Hall (Whatcom Museum).

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17 ROTH, 612.
18 ROTH, 611
20 1919 POLK DIRECTORY FOR BELLINGHAM, 43-46.
The post-World War I recession did not last long for Bellingham. In 1919, the downtown and waterfront areas boomed again with shipping and industrial activity. The city had gained more railroad connections, including but not limited to the Great Northern; Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul; Northern Pacific; Bellingham and Northern; Canadian Pacific; and the Bellingham-Skagit Interurban. Steamboat lines connected Bellingham to the San Juan Islands, south across the Puget Sound, and north to Canada. The Puget Sound Traction, Light and Power Company owned and operated street railway lines in the city. One of the most important routes to Lake Whatcom began at the intersection of West Holly Street and Cornwall Avenue (formerly Dock Street) in the CBD. By 1925, most of the steamship companies and other water transportation companies located their offices in the upper story professional spaces within the CBD commercial buildings. Increasing the Whatcom Creek Waterway’s depth again in 1926 created fill for adjoining tidelands, where the 40-ton paper pulp factory of the San Juan Island Pulp Manufacturing Company (later known as the Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Company, and Georgia Pacific) was built.

Figures 25 & 26. Bellingham’s first Fire Station No. 1 at 201 Prospect Street, above, was later demolished and replaced with a new station (below) in 1927.

21 1919 POLK DIRECTORY FOR BELLINGHAM, 43-46.

22 ROTH, 619.
The 1920s also ushered in the automobile era and a decade of extraordinary activity in the arena of commercial (re)development of the CBD. Recreation and tourism attractions lured more and more visitors to the city, particularly by car. Visitors to Mount Baker National Forest used Bellingham as a jumping off point, and the hotels and restaurants of the time were still located in the CBD. Bus service from Bellingham to Seattle and Vancouver, BC began in the 1920s. In 1927, multiple interurban rail and bus lines merged as North Coast Lines. Between 1928 and 1939, interurban rail service declined and eventually ceased. These transportation options all based their passenger depots and offices in the CBD. Between 1920 and 1925 five new department stores opened in the city, all within the CBD. The Metropolitan Tract, an area in the northern blocks of the CBD around the intersection of West Champion Street and North Commercial Street, witnessed a reimagining of business center design. The Bellingham Development Company (affiliated with the Metropolitan Building Company of Seattle) purchased several lots, removed the existing buildings, and erected modern ones designed by prominent architects, at great investment cost. The Metropolitan Tract structures include the Mount Baker Theatre (106 North Commercial Street) and its associated retail complex along North Commercial and Champion streets, the Bellingham Hotel (Bellingham Towers, 119 North Commercial Street), and the Montague and McHugh (Bon Marche) Building (114 West Magnolia Street).

![Figure 27. Puget Sound Power & Light Building on State Street at Magnolia housed a bus depot in the 1940s.](image)

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PUGET SOUND POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY RECORDS FINDING AID, NORTHWEST DIGITAL ARCHIVES.
In the 1930s, the Great Depression plunged most private development across the country into a state of suspension. Bellingham fared no better. As the nation grappled with the economic depression, businesses in the CBD struggled to keep their doors open. Mills and fishing enterprises, already hard hit by the dwindling availability of raw resources, further slowed or closed as markets collapsed. Passenger and freight rail transportation, already under pressure from competition from automobiles and trucks, experienced further decline. Federal work relief projects brought some measure of stimulus to the local economy through public infrastructure projects. These included dock and warehouse improvements, construction of a new sea wall, creation of a protected harbor for small fishing boats, modernization of public buildings, construction of an airport, and repair of streets and sewers.\(^{24}\) Even the ambitious Metropolitan Tract redevelopment of the 1920s suffered. By 1932, the new Montague and McHugh store (completed in 1927) was in receivership.\(^{25}\)

\(^{24}\) WASHINGTON, A GUIDE TO THE EVERGREEN STATE, REVISED 1950, 181.

\(^{25}\) NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION, MONTAGUE AND MCHUGH BUILDING, MICHAEL SULLIVAN AND LYNN HOLLINGSWORTH, 1993.
The economic decline of the 1930s reversed with the advent of World War II. The U.S. entered the war in 1941, and Bellingham’s industry quickly ramped up to meet the new demand. Jobs reappeared, producing canned salmon and other food products for the troops and building ships for the government. Demand for lumber and wood products rose and construction of an industrial alcohol plant commenced on the waterfront, all to meet wartime needs. Growth of war related industries also brought an influx of workers to the city, increasing demand for residential accommodations.26 The Boeing Company converted the vacant Montague and McHugh Building in the Metropolitan Tract into a bomb casing factory, operating from 1943-1946.27

After the end of World War II and into the 1950s, Bellingham’s waterfront remained an active industrial area. Puget Sound Pulp and Timber Company operated the nation’s largest sulphite pulp mill. Three plywood plants operated along the waterfront along with steel and iron manufacturers, a furniture industry, boat building, cement and chain works, and a diverse manufacturing field. New canneries opened, along with frozen food and cold storage plants.28 The city maintained its role as a transportation hub. Small boats as well

26 WASHINGTON, A GUIDE TO THE EVERGREEN STATE, REVISED 1950, 181-182.
28 “YOUR HANDY GUIDE TO BELLINGHAM AND WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON DEFENSE PRODUCTION FACILITIES,” 1951.
as large ocean vessels could be accommodated at the various harbors and docks built up during the war. The Bellingham Airport benefited from air connections across the country, and access to three transcontinental railroads continued. Within the CBD, the Northern Pacific had a former depot at Magnolia and Railroad Avenue and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific had a former depot at 1100 Railroad Avenue. The building at 1327-29 North State Street was once an auto stage (bus) depot. Recreation and cultural activities thrived in the booming post war climate, with three theaters (the American, Grand, and Mount Baker) operating in the CBD, of which only the Mount Baker remains today.

Figures 31 & 32. Both Sears and the J.C. Penny Co. were shopping destinations in downtown Bellingham in the 1950s.

Figure 33. The J.C. Penny Co. was later moved to a larger, more modern building at 1304 Cornwall Ave.

20 1913-1950 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS, SHEET 45.
The 1960s saw a shifting of retail and commercial activity out from the CBD. At the start of the decade, the city’s department stores were still concentrated in the CBD, with a Bon Marche, JC Penney, Sears Roebuck, JJ Newberry, Wahl’s and the Golden Rule. Only one store of this type was located outside the CBD – the Jarvie Department Store (241 Main Street, Fairhaven). Most of the former downtown hotels shifted to new uses, such as retirement living or apartments, after new hotels and motels went up along Interstate 5. In the late 1980s a shopping mall was built near the interstate, and drew long-time retail enterprises out of the downtown. Modernist style health clinics, churches, and banks occupied lots where older buildings formerly stood. The CBD’s Civic Center received a new post office (315 Prospect Street) in 1963, and the recreation/culture function of the district has continued through the Mount Baker Theatre and the Whatcom Museum. The shift in transportation routes and modes, along with a change in residential patterns, altered where Bellingham residents lived, shopped, and conducted business. As of 2012, the CBD is once again a hub for cultural, civic, financial and service functions of the greater Bellingham community. The many historic buildings of the CBD serve as landmarks, and provide character and context to newer infill development. Some continue their original functions and others have been adapted to new uses, particularly local specialty shops and restaurants.

Figure 34. Holly Street was part of the State Highway 99 and was a major commercial corridor until Interstate I-5 was built in the 1960s.
FINDINGS

This section presents an overview of surveyed properties, and analyzes information collected during field work -- specifically, areas of significance, the criteria for nominating properties to the National Register, and general findings of the Project.

The structure for analysis references the National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.” Further recommended readings include National Register bulletins on specific property types. These bulletins are available through the National Register of Historic Places Program on the National Park Service webpage: http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/

As mentioned earlier in this report, two additional historic registers -- the Washington State Heritage Register (WHR), and the Bellingham Register of Historic Places (BRHP) -- are available for owners of historic properties in Bellingham. Like the National Register, the WHR is an honorary designation. More information about the WHR can be found on the DAHP website at www.dahp.wa.gov/washington-heritage-register. The BRHP, established through a Local Historic Preservation Ordinance (BMC 17.90), requires adherence to certain regulations, but also offers financial and other benefits for listed properties. As of the completion of this report, 19 buildings were listed on the BRHP. Information about the BRHP can be found at the City’s website at www.cob.org/services/neighborhoods/historic-preservation/local-historic-preservation.aspx.

For the purposes of this report, the National Register of Historic Places criteria have been used for the evaluation process. All properties that are eligible for the NRHP are assumed to be eligible for the WHR and BRHP.
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES ELIGIBILITY

The NRHP establishes four basic criteria by which the level of a resource's contribution to the nation’s cultural heritage can be gauged. These are then qualified by the level at which they contribute: local, statewide, and national. These criteria dictate that resources:

A: **Be associated with events** that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B: **Be associated with the lives** of persons significant in our past; or

C: **Embody the distinctive characteristics** of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D: **Are likely to yield information** important to our understanding of prehistory or history.

The Project also employed Criteria Consideration G due to several significant properties in the survey area that were built within the last 50 years as of 2012. Criterion G applies to properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years when they are either individually exceptionally significant, or an integral part of a historic district eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For historic districts, the period of significance must include the construction date of the property under consideration, and the majority of properties within the district must be 50 years or older. Integral does not imply a homogenous character to the district’s architectural character, but instead that the property under consideration is important within the overall development narrative of the district.

The determinations of eligibility were made by Artifacts as a “point in time,” cursory estimation. Changes made to buildings over time may result in a building becoming eligible, or ineligible. The DAHP makes the formal determination on eligibility for NRHP and WHR listing, and the City of Bellingham’s Historic Preservation Commission makes the formal determination for Bellingham Register of Historic Places eligibility.
Areas of Significance

Areas of significance are defined by the NRHP as the “aspect of history in which a… property, through use, occupation, physical character, or association, influenced the development or identity of its community or region.” The areas of significance found for the CBD include but are not limited to:

**Architecture**, for the contribution of numerous (including many un-credited) designers and builders as well as locally, regionally, or internationally renowned architects such as Leonard Bindon, F. Stanley Piper, William Cox, John Graham, Sr., Robert C. Reamer, Frank C. Burns, Alfred Lee, F. Thornton Doan, Max Umbrechts, Carl F. Gould, and Proctor & Farrel Architects.

**Commerce**, for the historic role of prominent financial institutions within the CBD and the continued presence of the Bellingham National Bank’s two historic locations. (Clover Block & the Bellingham National Bank Building) Additionally, the CBD witnessed commercial business development for both small businesses and department stores, such as the Montague & McHugh Building.

**Politics/Government**, for the prominent 1892 City Hall, the current 1939 City Hall, Fire Station No. 1, and the Bellingham Federal Building in addition to other political and governmental offices.

**Transportation**, for the CBD’s direct link to some of the most important transportation companies in Washington’s history, including the Great Northern Railroad, Northern Pacific Railroad, and Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. Other significant transportation developments included the Whatcom County Railway and Light Company and the streetcar system.

**Recreation/Culture**, for the Mount Baker Theatre, Whatcom Museum, YMCA, and other recreation and culture-related buildings in the CBD.

Period of Significance

The NRHP defines the period of significance as “the span of time when a property was associated with important events, activities, persons, cultural groups, and land uses or attained important physical qualities or characteristics.” These periods can include one or more isolated events, a series, or continuity of activities. The “Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1892-1915 MPD” identifies two periods of significance for the district: Railroad Speculation and its Effect on the Early Towns of Bellingham, 1882-1900 and Consolidation and Commercial Growth of Bellingham’s Central Business District, 1900-1915. In addition to these two periods of significance, the general minimum of 50 years of age for listing to the NRHP was used to guide eligibility recommendations. Some contemporary properties built after 1962 utilized criteria consideration G for properties having achieved significance within the last 50 years.

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30 “GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING AND DOCUMENTING RURAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPES,” NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN 30.
Assessment of Historic Integrity

Merriam-Webster’s dictionary gives a definition of integrity as “the quality or state of being complete or undivided.” This definition applies to historic resources and addresses the degree to which components tell a story and provide evidence of a property’s past functions. The NRHP defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance, and measures integrity by applying seven criteria: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Integrity Criteria

**Location** refers to the physical components occupying the same locations upon which they were built. Exceptions to this can be buildings moved during the period of significance for institution-related functions.

**Design** involves the planning of the site, including the placement and layout of circulation networks, land uses and activities, water systems, buildings, structures, and objects.

**Setting** encompasses the physical environment that exists with regard to a historic building, site, structure, object or landscape. Changes in vistas, topography, and vegetation are some of the variables to consider when evaluating setting.

**Integrity of materials** extends not only to the typical items such as building materials, but also to the physical material of a site’s vegetation related to land uses and activities.

**Workmanship** speaks to the manner in which people build the functional and decorative elements of their environment. The quality of construction and materials, or rather the changes in those factors in a given property, may indicate when alterations/renovations occurred.

The **feeling** generated by a property’s physical components represents those intangible experiences characterizing its identity. Components include view corridors, vistas, scale and design of the buildings, landscaping, and the ability to move along historic circulation networks.

**Associations** represent those connections between a property’s physical components and the functions associated with the period of significance. These associations remain the strongest through the presence of extant historic building and continuation of original use and/or ownership, such as residences which remain under domestic use.
Generally speaking, the historic properties surveyed for the Project exhibited varying degrees of integrity as related to the seven criteria listed above. Most buildings retain integrity of location, but there was great variety among buildings according to the other six criteria. Alterations observed in the field were recorded in the HPI forms and factored into NRHP eligibility consideration.

**Threats to Integrity**

Changes and threats to historic integrity stem from a variety of factors. The following list conveys some of the most common examples include the following:

**Incompatible infill:** Some historic buildings in the CBD have been replaced, and many have been replaced with infill that departs significantly from the scale, design, materials, color, and texture of surrounding historic buildings.

**Applied storefronts:** Between the 1950s and 1980s, in an effort to “modernize” older buildings, Bellingham’s CBD saw the application of new storefronts placed over existing historic storefronts on many commercial buildings. Often, these applied storefronts imply a greater loss of historic fabric than has actually occurred. Within the last few years, several building owners have removed these applied storefronts to reveal remarkably intact original storefronts.

**Incompatible window replacements:** Window replacements were the most common alteration to buildings surveyed within the CBD. Many of the replacements depart not only from the original pattern and size of openings, but also from original frame and sash proportions, window pane configuration, muntin profiles, placement depth within openings, material, glass characteristics, and associated details and decorative elements. Many use highly reflective coatings on the glass. All these modifications alter the integrity of a building’s design.

**Changing circulation routes and transportation methods:** The shift in passenger transportation modes, particularly from streetcars to automobiles, resulted in the need for wider roads and on-and-off street parking. Demolition of historic buildings has made way for surface parking, drive-through banks on large corner lots, and the construction of large-scale parking garages.
Historic Register Listing and Eligibility Status

Eligibility: National Register of Historic Places / Individual Properties

As of May, 2012 18 properties had been listed on the NRHP at the individual level of significance within the CBD. One component of the Project was to identify additional properties within the CBD potentially individually eligible for listing to the NRHP (see Map 2: National Register Eligibility / Individual Properties and Table 1 for potentially eligible properties).
Eligibility: National Register of Historic Places / Districts

There are currently no historic districts in the Project area. However, survey work identified several areas with potentially eligible NRHP districts, the eligibility of which stems from the number of contributing buildings—that is, those buildings that retain their original facade composition, proportions, materials, form, and stylistic influences characteristic of their period of construction—within a contiguous area (see Map 3: National Register Eligibility / Districts and Table 1 for boundaries, and potentially contributing properties).

The following lists potential districts:

A **Downtown District**, which encompasses the main downtown core and contains a strong grouping of commercial, mixed-use, and other types of properties. This district should include consideration of a period of significance well into the 1960s to pick up potential Criterion Consideration G properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years. This district could be expanded by adding the following areas:

- **A Downtown District “Metropolitan Tract”**, which includes the Mt. Baker Theater and Bellingham Tower, and could also be its own stand-alone district; and the
- **A Downtown District “Extended”**, which would add historic buildings along Cornwall Avenue. Unlike the “Metropolitan Tract”, this area does not have enough integrity on its own to be a stand-alone district.

A **Railroad & State Corridor District**, which includes a collection of transportation and industry related historic buildings and features that reference the early functions and roles of Railroad Avenue and North State Street. This district could potentially be expanded by adding the following areas:

- **A Railroad & State Corridor District “Puget Power”**, which includes a group of buildings that provided the power for electrification of the street car, which in turn influenced the development along Bellingham’s North State Street corridor. This collection could be included as part of the Railroad/State corridor district, or could be its own stand-alone district for its association with the Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company; and the
- **A Railroad & State Corridor District “Extended”** area along East Holly Street, which exhibits a good concentration of properties that could be part of an expanded district. Like the Downtown District “Extended”, this area would not have the integrity to be its own stand-alone district.

The two core district areas (Downtown, and Railroad & State Street Corridor), and their extended areas could potentially be combined into one downtown National Historic district. The final decision on the eligibility of such a district would be dependent on determination by the National Park Service.

Finally, a **Residential District** that encompasses a distinctive group of houses along North Forest Street that would not be individually eligible could potentially be established as a district. Future survey and inventory of the Sehome Neighborhood directly adjacent to the project area may reveal additional expansion of this district, and might also be adjusted to include the churches south of Rose Street.
Eligibility: National Register of Historic Places / Districts
In 2003, the City completed a Multiple Property Listing Document (MPD) for commercial buildings built between 1882-1915 in Bellingham’s Central Business District (many more built after 1915 would be eligible if additional historic contexts were added, if the document were expanded. See Map 4: National Register Eligibility / Multiple Property Listing (MPD) and Table 1 for potentially eligible properties.

The MPD provides a method to concurrently list a series of related, but independent, properties on the National Register of Historic Places. An MPD provided the historic context portion of a nomination, and establishes the eligibility criteria, making it much easier for owners of historic commercial buildings within a documentation area to list their buildings, enabling them to take advantage of federal tax and other incentives.

The Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882-1915 MPD serves as a foundation for evaluating the eligibility of properties for listing to the NRHP within a geographical area and defined periods of significance. The NRHP states that an MPD “may be used to nominate and register thematically-related historic properties simultaneously or to establish the registration requirements for properties that may be nominated in the future.”

In 2012 the Hotel Laube, Barlow Building, Sweet and Company Building, Daylight Building, Sanitary Meat Market, and the Morse Hardware Company Building were listed on the NRHP as part of the MPD.
Eligibility: Bellingham Register of Historic Places / Individual Properties

One component of the Project was the identification of other CBD properties individually eligible for listing on the BRHP. See Map 5: Bellingham Historic Register Eligibility / Individual Properties and Table 1 for potentially eligible properties.
RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing analysis on the types and condition of historic buildings in the CBD, Artifacts respectfully submits the following recommendations to the City:

1. **Sponsor, encourage, and / or nominate individual properties and historic district(s)** within the CBD to the NRHP;

2. **Encourage private property owners to nominate individual properties and historic district(s)** within the CBD to the BRHP;

3. **Explore developing new or expanding existing associated historic contexts** and registration requirements for the Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882-1915 MPD to enable property owners of at least 25 post-1915 commercial buildings to pursue listing and take advantage of financial incentives associated with rehabilitation of their buildings. Many of these buildings would not otherwise be individually eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing, which is required for some financial incentives;

4. **Document and develop a plan to encourage preservation of historic streetscape features** such as light fixtures, granite curbs, areaways and sidewalk prisms, metal manhole covers, etc. Collectively these elements provide an important contribution to the historic streetscape character; and

5. **Consider creating a “conservation district” for the CBD.** Bellingham does not currently have a process to create conservation districts, but could establish one in the future through municipal ordinance. Conservation districts commonly encompass an area greater than an individual historic district, and combine sustainability and preservation goals to aid planning, building and land owner development. A conservation district draws upon architectural and streetscape precedents from adjacent historic district(s), and can help provide design direction for collections of buildings that are not individually eligible for a historic register and do not contribute to a historic district. This in turn can help development around a historic district maintain compatibility with the district and avoid abrupt transitions. Design guidelines for conservation districts are less specific than for historic districts, and often include sustainability goals for new construction. Inclusion in the conservation district can also provide financial incentives for building rehabilitation.

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31 **AREAWAYS ARE THE USABLE AREAS, GENERALLY IN THE STREET RIGHT-OF-WAY, BELOW THE SIDEWALK AND BETWEEN THE BUILDING FOUNDATION AND THE STREET WALL. SIDEWALK PRISMS, ALSO KNOWN AS VAULT OR PAVEMENT LIGHTS, ARE GLASS PRISMS SET INTO SIDEWALKS TO LET LIGHT INTO VAULTS, AREAWAYS, AND BASEMENTS BELOW. PRISMS WERE USED INSTEAD OF FLAT GLASS BECAUSE THEY DISPERSE LIGHT AND DIFFUSE IT OVER A LARGE AREA.**
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