WILLAMETTE
CULTURAL RESOURCES ASSOCIATES, LTD.

MEMORANDUM

To: Xing Hua Group

From: Alicia B. Valentino, Ph.D., RPA, Archaeologist

Date: July 22, 2020

Re: Cultural Resources Desktop Survey Mercer Island Mixed Use Development, King County, Washington, DAHP Project No. 2020-02-01166

Introduction

Xing Hua Group proposes to develop a mixed-use multi-family property on Mercer Island, Washington. The project requires State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) has requested cultural resources desktop review and preparation of a Monitoring and Inadvertent Discovery Plan (MIDP) for the project. To those ends, Willamette Cultural Resources Associates, Ltd. (WillametteCRA) has prepared this Technical Memorandum.

Project Description and Location

The Project Area is 2885 78th Avenue SE and 2750 77th Avenue SE, Mercer Island, WA (King County parcels #5315101326 and 5315101316) (Figure 1, Figure 2). The proposed project (Project) will consist of a five-story, mixed-use building with one to two levels of below-ground parking. The parcels are currently occupied by an asphalt-paved parking lot and two retail buildings. Excavations for belowground parking will extend between 22 and 32 feet below surface.

Tribal Coordination

Four Tribal governments have been identified as having an interest in the cultural resource work at the proposed development location. These are the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Tribes.

WillametteCRA notified each Tribe of the Project by letter on June 1, 2020. Dennis Lewarch, Suquamish Tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer responded that the Suquamish did not have any concerns regarding cultural resources. Richard Young, Tulalip Tribes Cultural Resources Manager indicated the Tulalip Tribes were interested in this project and requested an MIDP.

Environmental Background and Landscape History

The project will take place on a developed property currently occupied by a paved parking lot, a 1962 building, and a 1994 building. The property is fairly level, with the exception of the eastern half of the 1962 property being slightly higher in elevation—as a result, the 1962 building is one story on its eastern half and two-stories on the western half. The property is on Mercer Island,

roughly ½-mile from Lake Washington and less than ¼-mile from I-90. The vicinity of the Project Area is highly developed with shopping centers and multi-family residences.

The Project Area is located within the Puget Lowland physiographic province, an area stretching between the Olympic Mountains to the west and the Cascade Range to the east. The modern landscape of western Washington is diverse, and characterized by landforms and sediments produced across multiple spatial and temporal scales in glacial, deglacial, and non-glacial environments. During the most recent glacial period, the Vashon Stade of Fraser glaciation, the Puget Lobe of the Cordilleran ice sheet extended south into the Seattle area approximately 17,500 and 16,500 years before present (BP). As the glacier retreated around 16,400 BP, hundreds to thousands of feet of unconsolidated till and outwash sediment were exposed on the new deglaciated surfaces (Troost and Booth 2008).

The north half of the Project Area is mapped as modified land (areas leveled by cut and fill), while the southern half of the Project Area is mapped as *Qsc*, lacustrine sediments characterized by unconsolidated silt, clay, and fine sand (Waldron et al. 1962). Near surface sediments in the Project Area are mapped as Bellingham silt loam (NRCS 2020). This is a poorly drained soil formed in alluvium. In particular, it forms in small depressions on glacial till plains (US Bureau of Soils 1960). A geotechnical report prepared for the Project demonstrates extensive fill deposits 2-20 feet thick over the Project Area. The fill directly overlays material that could be Bellingham silt loam, based on the descriptions in the geotechnical report (Moore 2018).

The Project Area is within the western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) vegetation zone, characterized by mixed stands of western hemlock, western red cedar, and Douglas fir. The dense understory includes swordfern, Oregon grape, salal, huckleberry, and a variety of herbaceous species (Franklin and Dyrness 1973). Existing vegetation in the Project Area is urban, manicured grasses, shrubs, and trees. Various fauna would have existed in the vicinity of the Project Area prior to development, as well as waterfowl and large and small mammals.

Native Peoples

Little archaeological evidence has been found so far associated with Late Pleistocene and early Holocene human occupation of the Puget Lowlands, although recent investigation at the Bear Creek site (45KI839), northeast of the Project Area in the Sammamish River basin, has contributed a substantial amount of data from intact archaeological deposits dating between about 10,000 and 12,500 years before present (BP) (e.g., Kopperl 2016). Aside from the Bear Creek site, knowledge of this period in the Puget Lowlands and foothills is limited to several isolated finds of artifacts diagnostic to this period but sparsely distributed across the region and lacking context. More common are Olcott sites, named after the type site in Snohomish County near Arlington and found mostly on glacial outwash surfaces in the Puget Lowland and inland foothill valleys (e.g., Kidd 1964). The distinctive Olcott stone tool assemblage consists of large, leaf-shaped and stemmed points and flake tools manufactured from locally available cobbles. These assemblages are usually interpreted as evidence of an early, highly mobile hunting and gathering adaptation. This pattern may have persisted for over 6,000 years and near its end is marked by increasing reliance on marine and riverine resources.

After about 5,000 BP larger populations organized in more complex ways to utilize a wide range of locally available resources, including large and small mammals, shellfish, fish, berries, roots, and bulbs, with an increasing emphasis on salmon over time. Shell middens containing large

quantities of shellfish remains and marine fish and mammal bone are common on the saltwater shoreline. Ground stone, bone, antler, and shell tools became increasingly common and more diversified through time. Full-scale development inland that included hunting, gathering, and riverine fishing traditions as represented in the ethnographic record are apparent after about 2,500 BP in the archaeological record, though likely occurred earlier. Large semi-sedentary populations occupied cedar plank houses located at river mouths and confluences and on protected shorelines. Artifacts made of both local and imported materials occur, indicating complex and diversified technologies for fishing, hunting, food processing, and storage. Wealth-status objects, status differentiation in burials, art objects, and ornaments are also represented during this period (e.g., Ames and Maschner 1999).

The land in and around the Project Area is within the traditional territory of the *dxwd ə?ábš*, translated to Duwamish, a southern Coast Salish group that spoke Southern Lushootseed. Notably, Lake Washington was labeled “Dawamish [sic] Lake” on the 1862 General Land Office map. The name was changed to Lake Washington in 1864. Records noted over 12,000 Lushootseed-speaking peoples occupying the Puget Sound region prior to European contact, but a series of epidemics, including smallpox and measles, devastated the population, reducing it to less than 5,000 by the 1850s (Suttles and Lane 1990).

Southern Coast Salish groups generally lived in villages for part of the year and made journeys to temporary camps to gather seasonal resources. Those villages located on waterways relied on fish and shellfish, and supplemented their diet with berries, roots, bulbs, and nuts. Deer and elk were also hunted, as well as over 20 species of waterfowl (Suttles and Lane 1990).

There are three recorded Native American place names on Mercer Island. The first is approximately ½-mile north of the Project Area: *TsEktsEk3a’bats*, or “gooseberry bushes”. This location is the former Proctor Ranch, which was known for plentiful wild roses. The second, Q3oq3o’btsi, or “water lilies”, is a place on the west shore of the island where there are plants with large yellow flowers. This is approximately two miles south of the Project Area. The third location, *La’gw1tsatEb*, “taking off” or “stripping” is the name for the southernmost promontory of Mercer Island (4¼-miles south). The location was named for supernatural beings (*swa’watiut1d*; “earth beings”) that lived in the old tree stumps and removed their bark like a person removed their clothing. Reportedly, a visit to the site by an old man turned the man “crazy”, giving rise to the name (Waterman 2001).

Little evidence of Native Americans use has been found on the island, and that is limited to the south end of the island. Native American people didn’t permanently inhabit the island because they were uncomfortable staying there overnight, supposedly due to evil spirits (Ledbetter Padgett 2013; Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce 2020). Legends claimed that the island sank into the lake each night, and rose each morning. One day, Thomas Mercer, who was known to visit the island frequently, was not on shore to meet the Native American who transported him back and forth across the lake on day-trips. When the Native American returned the following morning, Thomas Mercer was standing bone dry on the shore; the Native American assumed that Mercer had survived the sinking of the island (Ledbetter Padgett 2013).

European American History

Mercer Island, originally “Mercer’s island”, received its current name in 1860. It is named after early Seattle pioneer Thomas Mercer (Stein 2002a). Early Euroamerican settlement of the island took place in the 1870s. One of the first settlers was Victus Schmid, a wagon-maker’s

apprentice from Baden, Germany. He and cobbler John Wenzler built a cabin on the island, but after a tree fell on their cabin, they left discouraged. Two years later, Schmid returned with his wife and two sons. Other early settlers include Charles and Agnes Otto in 1885. C.C. Calkins platted the town of East Seattle (the city was renamed Mercer Island in 1924) and built an elaborate resort on the western side of the island in 1891, but when it burned to the ground in 1908, the town suffered greatly (Lange 1998). Transportation to and from the island was dependent on rowboats, steamboats, and ferries until the East Channel Bridge opened in 1923 and linked the island with the east side of Lake Washington (Ledbetter Padgett 2013).

The island remained a rural getaway for Seattleites, but the opening of the Lake Washington Floating Bridge in 1940 enabled the island to turn into a bedroom community for city commuters. The island's population grew through the mid-1900s, and the island's growing pains were evident in debates regarding utilities, infrastructure, businesses, and incorporation. On July 5, 1960, the town was incorporated (Stein 2002b).

Project Area

The first recorded property owner of the Project Area was Corliss P. Stone, who bought 160 acres, including the Project Area, in 1869 (Bureau of Land Management 2020) (Figure 3). There is no information to support him having developed the property, and he was a prolific property investor so it may have been a prospective property. Stone was born in Vermont, and married Frances H. Boyd in Seattle on March 11, 1865. They had a son, Corliss E. Stone, in 1867. The 1870 census lists him working as merchant. It is unknown what happened to Frances, but Corliss P. Stone married Elmira L. at an unknown date (sometime between the 1870 and 1880s census). They did not have any children. He died suddenly on September 14, 1906 (ancestry.com).

Corliss P. was the third mayor of Seattle, having been elected in 1872 after serving on the City Council for three years. His term was cut short when he was caught embezzling $15,000 from his firm, Stone & Burnett. He immediately fled to San Francisco with a married woman (it is unknown if this was Elmira). He returned to Seattle by the 1880s, having restored his reputation and having a building named after him (the now-demolished Corliss Building in Pioneer Square). Stone worked as the Vice-President and Treasurer of the Pacific Electric Light Company and as President of the Lake Union Transportation Company. Two streets are named after him: Corliss Avenue North and Stone Way North (PCAD 2020). At the time of his death in 1906, his probate record listed an estate worth of $40,000 (over $1.1 million in 2020) (ancestry.com).

The owner of the Project Area is noted as J.J. McGilvra in 1907, and it becomes part of the larger McGilvra's Island Addition by 1912 (Anderson Map Company 1907; Kroll Map Company 1912, 1926; Metsker 1936) (Figure 4). McGilvra was another notable early Seattleite, having served as the U.S. Attorney General for Washington Territory and like Stone, was a land developer (Thompson and Marr 2002). It is unknown if McGilvra developed the property.

A 2018 environmental assessment for the Project mentions an oil-heated residence having been in the Project Area in 1949 (Moore 2018). Other than this residence, the only recorded development in the Project Area was construction of the extant 1962 building (historicaerials.com).

Previous Archaeological Investigations

On May 11, 2020, WillametteCRA reviewed records on file with the Washington State DAHP's online database (WISAARD) to identify previous cultural resources studies and archaeological or historical resources within 1-mile of the Project Area. The WISAARD review indicated six cultural resources studies (Table 1), one cemetery, and one historic-Register property. One historic-aged property is in the Project Area—the 1962 building.

Table 1. Previous Cultural Resources Investigations Within 1 Mile of the Project Area.

Report Reference	WISAARD #	Type of Investigation and Project	Closest Relation to Project Area	Associated Resources within 1-Mile
Walker Gray 2009	1353924	Cultural Resources Survey Lake Washington Congestion Management Program SR 520/ 1-90 - Active Traffic Management Project	920-feet northeast	None
Bartoy 2010	1354564	I-90/SR 520 Urban Partnership Agreement Active Traffic Management System, Determination of No Adverse Effect	0.24-mi northeast	None
Kleinschmidt and Gardner 2018	1692594	Cultural Resources Assessment for the Property at 7840 & 8000 SE 20th Street Project, Mercer Island	0.64-mi north/northeast	None
Tingwall et al. 2008	1351333	Cultural Resources Report, SE 40th Street Improvements Project, King County, Mercer Island	0.75-mi southeast	None
Kassa-Kleinschmidt 2017	1690030	Cultural Resources Assessment for the Phillips Beach Cove Project, Mercer Island	0.70-mi north/northeast	None
Bundy 2015	1686361	Cultural Resources Survey Report, Calkins Point Restoration.	0.77-mi north/northeast	None

Cultural Resources Investigations

Table 1 lists the six cultural resources investigations conducted within 1 mile of the Project Area. Three of these (Bartoy 2010; Tingwall et al. 2008; and Walker Gray 2009) did not include subsurface investigation. The remaining three (Bundy 2015; Kassa-Kleinschmidt 2017; and Kleinschmidt and Gardner 2018), each had limited shovel probe survey conducted. Each of those three projects identified shallow fill deposits overlying lacustrine sediments. No archaeological resources were discovered in any of the investigations.

Cemeteries

The Mercer Island Presbyterian Remembrance Garden Columbarium, 45KI881, is ½-mile southeast of the Project Area. It was built in 1956. The property has not been inventoried. No impacts to this resource are anticipated from the current Project.

Historic-Register Properties

The Keewaydin Clubhouse, built in 1922, is a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed property 0.70-miles northwest of the Project Area. Located at 1836 72nd Avenue SE, the property is eligible based on its social history (Criterion A) and its Colonial Revival architecture (Criterion C) (Lind 2005). No impacts to this resource are anticipated from the current Project.

Historic-Aged Properties

The extant building at 2885 78th Avenue SE is planned to be demolished for the Project. The building was one of three planned for the shopping development in the early 1960s. The upper floor was originally occupied by Alms Drug, and the lower level by three separate tenants. It was inventoried in 2018 and was determined Not Eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (Houser 2018).

Geotechnical Review

WillametteCRA reviewed two geotechnical assessment reports completed for the Project (Moore and Huff 2018; Veenstra and Winter 2015). A series of test pits and hollow-stem auger borings were excavated across the Project Area. The data demonstrated extensive filling of the Project Area, with fill ranging between 2 and 20 feet thick. The maximum depth of ground disturbance varies across the Project Area, with disturbance being the shallowest in the northwest corner of the property (~10 feet) and the deepest in the southeast corner (~28 feet). Based on the assessments, construction excavations will not completely exceed the depths of fill material.

Expectations

The Project Area is classified in DAHP's statewide predictive model as "Very High Risk" for containing buried, precontact-period cultural resources. The statewide predictive model is a tool used by archaeologists and planners to evaluate potential archaeological risks on a broad scale. The model was developed to statistically evaluate multiple environmental factors (e.g., elevation, slope percent, aspect, distance to water, soils, and landforms) in order to predict where archaeological resources might be found. It is not a substitute for conducting site-specific subsurface investigations. WillametteCRA considers there to be a moderate to high likelihood of intact, buried precontact- and historic-period resources to exist in the Project Area due to the extensive fill deposits. While no buried A-horizon was noted in the geotechnical data (a buried A-horizon indicates a past, potentially habitable surface), the placement of fill suggests that any previous surfaces may have been "capped" by the fill which would preserve cultural deposits, if present.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Geotechnical data demonstrates extensive filling of the Project Area, with fill ranging between 2 and 20 feet thick. Evidence of Native American use of the landscape may remain beneath this fill. Therefore, WillametteCRA considers there to be a moderate to high risk of precontact, Native American resources to exist in the Project Area. Willamette CRA also considers there to be a moderate risk of buried, historic-period resources to exist in the area. Remnants of the 1949 residence may exist, either in situ, such as foundation or walkway remnants, or as debris across the parcel.

Based on these expectations, WillametteCRA recommends cultural resources monitoring of ground-disturbing activities in the Project Area. Archaeological monitoring may cease in an area once excavations reach 2 feet into intact sediments underlying the fill (such as the silts and clay detailed in the geotechnical report, Moore 2018), or upon reaching the depth of Project disturbance.

A monitoring and inadvertent discovery plan (MIDP) is attached to this technical report. The MIDP outlines the procedures to be followed during ground disturbance and protocols in the event of a cultural resource discovery.

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Figure 1. USGS topographic map showing Project Area.

Figure 2. Aerial photograph showing Project Area.

Figure 3. 1862 General Land Office Map showing the Project Area.

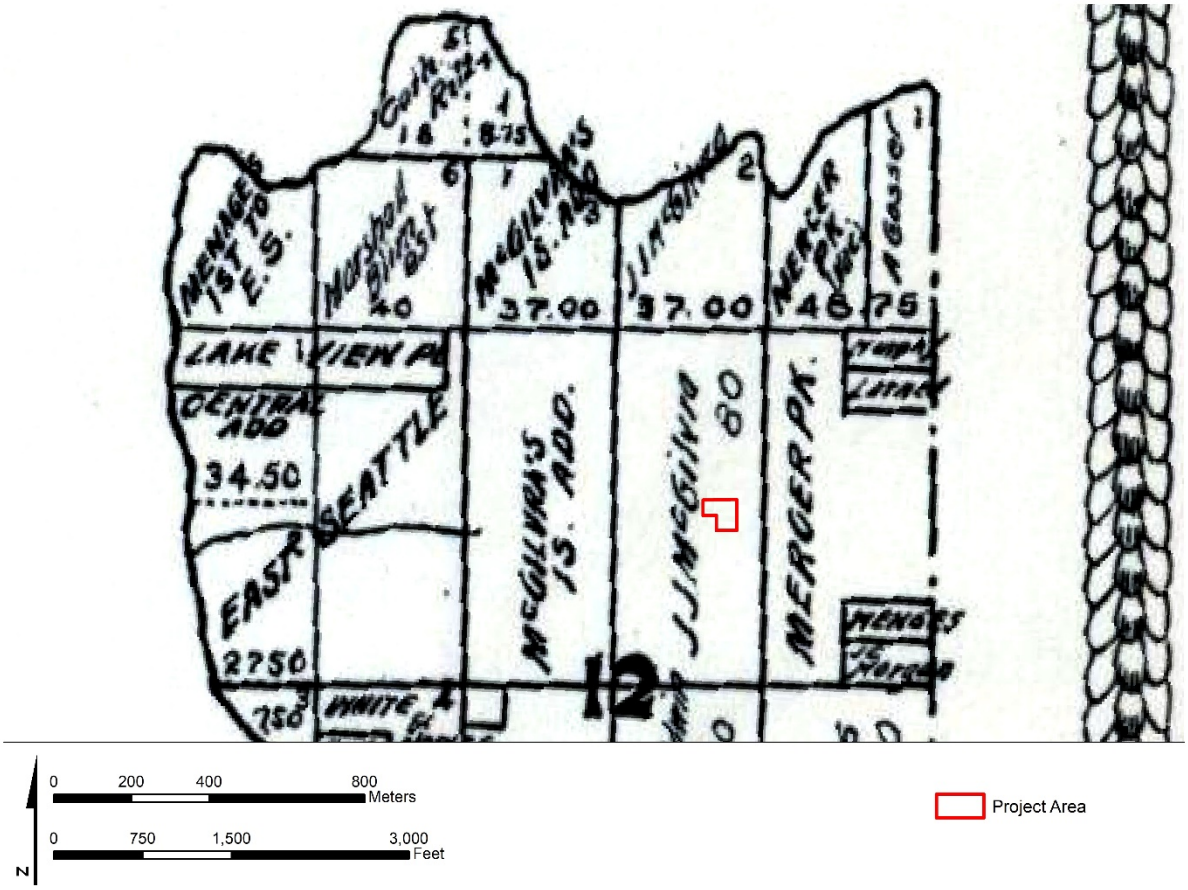

Figure 4. 1907 Anderson Map Company map showing the Project Area.