

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name CAMBRIDGE APARTMENTS

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 903 Union St.  not for publication

city or town Seattle  vicinity

state Washington code WA county King code 033 zip code 98101

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria

    A     B     C     D

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

WASHINGTON SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

    entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register

    determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register

    other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

SEATTLE APARTMENT BUILDINGS: 1900-1957

None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling/apartment  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling/apartment  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
CLASSICAL REVIVAL  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: CONCRETE  
walls: CONCRETE, BRICK, TERRA COTTA  
roof: ASPHALT  
other: \_\_\_\_\_

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The Cambridge Apartments is a handsome Classical Revival style apartment building in the First Hill neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. Built in 1923 for the Real Estate Investment Co., Inc., the L-shaped, ten-story, reinforced concrete building is clad in red brick, stucco, and terra cotta. Ten stories at the intersection of Union Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Ave., the building is only 8-9 stories at some location due to the steep surrounding topography. It was designed by the prominent Seattle architect Sherwood Ford. Known for designing a wide variety of building types, the Cambridge is his only known multi-family residential building in Seattle.

Built during one of Seattle's early economic booms, the apartment-hotel type was an important innovation in providing the city with a variety of high quality housing. At the time it was completed, it was praised for its concrete construction, elaborate Lobby and modern conveniences that came with its furnished apartments. Alternations have occurred to the first floor and many of the lobby's significant features are concealed, however, the majority of these features are intact. The upper floors, including the corridors and units, have remained relatively intact and continue to reflect apartment life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **SETTING**

Completed in 1923 and the largest apartment building of its time in Seattle<sup>1</sup>, the Cambridge Apartments sits on the western edge of the First Hill neighborhood and once towered over Downtown Seattle. Its unique siting against the wooded hillside minimizes its actual massive size. As the downtown grid was expanded up the hill, Union Street was interrupted by this steep portion of First Hill. Between 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Terry Ave., Union St. transitions to a long concrete ramp/stair taking pedestrians to where the street resumes above. Avoiding a dead end, the one block Hubbell Place cuts across the slope to Pike Street to the north. After the construction of Interstate 5, Freeway Park and the Washington State Convention Center, Hubbell Place was extended - becoming a three block connector under Freeway Park from Seneca St. to Pine St.

The L-shaped building occupies the northwest corner of the block and its main entry faces north to the Union St. stairway. The south side of the building faces a terraced grotto and a parking lot on the southernmost end of the property. The Terri Ann Apartments, a Modernist building borders the property to the east. Horizon House borders the property to the south beyond the parking lot. Freeway Park and the Washington State Convention Center are across the street to the west. The Elektra condominiums are across Union to the north.

#### **CURRENT APPEARANCE**

The Cambridge retains the typical elements associated with high-rise apartment blocks according to the MPD - *Seattle Apartment Buildings 1900-1957*. These elements include the rectilinear L-shape that is no apparent form the street; a single ornate entry, a large lobby with ornate materials; self-sufficient units with private kitchens; two elevators and a typical floor plan with corridors leading to the units.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Largest Apartment," *Seattle Times*, December 31, 1922

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

### **Exterior:**

The primary elevations on Union Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue of this reinforced concrete structure are a veneer of smooth dark red pressed brick with taupe-colored terra cotta ornamentation. The brick, with four-sided beveled edge on the face, is enhanced by a deep recessed mortar joint. The south and east elevations, away from the street, are clad in beige-painted stucco. Windows on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue are a symmetrical A, BB, AA, BB, AA, BB, A pattern. The Union elevation is similar but with its symmetry broken with a triparted window grouping above the main entry: A, BB, AA, BB, AA, BCB, A. Two concrete-framed stairs at the end of each the east and south sides have brick openings with metal railings and no windows.

*Base/First Floor:* The foundation is concrete finished to resemble granite and is topped by a brick soldier course. The front entrance has Classical egg-and-dart and rope-patterned terra cotta frame flanked by pilasters. The words “The Cambridge” are incised into the entry frieze and flanked by prominent rosettes. Recessed in the frame and over the doors is a garland pattern surrounding a blank shield. The frieze is topped by a dentilled cornice. The entry composition is topped with a false balcony of ornate wrought iron. Four windows opened into the original lobby space – two flanking the entry and two around the corner on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. These windows have similar terra cotta sills, frames and lintels.

*Floors Two through Ten:* The 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Union Street elevations are both composed in a classical Sullivanesque base-shaft-top skyscraper. Three divisions appear above the base: the third floor, a horizontal band capping off building’s base; floors four through nine forming the shaft; and the tenth floor top. Each distinct section is divided by terra cotta banding: a string course above the second story; a string course with dentils between the third and fourth stories; and a concave course above the ninth story. The terra cotta window sills match the string courses. The flat roof is finished with a prominent sheet metal cornice supported by bold ornamental scrolled consoles. The windows provide the primary verticality to the elevations, piercing these horizontal courses. Original fenestration consisted of large tripartite double-hung windows (at Living/Bed Rooms) alternating with pairs of smaller one-over-one double-hung windows (at Kitchens).

*Roofline/Parapet:* The flat roof is surrounded by a concrete parapet with brick veneer above the cornice. One stair penthouse at the south elevation and the elevator penthouse rise above the roof level. A concrete/stucco chimney extends from the second floor above the roof and parapet on the west elevation of the courtyard. A large sign identifying the building as “The Cambridge once occupied the roof at an angle to the primary elevations. Prior to the Washington State Convention Center construction, the building’s siting would have made this sign an easily identifiable piece of the Seattle skyline. Aerial photos after I-5 was completed appear to show the sign still existed in 1967.

*Courtyard:* The courtyard at the inside corner of the L-shape is a mysterious place. No historical photos of this area have been found. The only obvious access is from the south side of the site - currently through the far end of the parking lot. A curved concrete wall and stair indicate that residents may have accessed this area at some time. A typical apartment-hotel at that time would have provided an attractive garden space, if possible. A pipe extends from the stair rail-wall indicating a fountain may have existed at one time.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

## **Interior**

### **Floors One and Mezzanine:**

**Lobby:** Photos on early postcards depict the Lobby in its earliest configuration in 1923. At the time Maltby & Thurston Hotels assumed control of the building in 1925, the new owners and their “capable” pair of managers, Mr. & Mrs. C.S. Caplinger, made some design changes to the lobby. The lobby, according to the *Hotel New of the West*, was an “excellent and refined type.”<sup>2</sup>

Three square columns in a triangle arrangement create several smaller spaces intended for lounge sitting and working desk space. One elevator opens directly to the Lobby and another is accessed by a separate elevator lobby three steps up. Left of the lower elevator is the central stair. Originally built with an open iron railing, the railing was removed in 1925 and a wall built enclosing the room and creating a desk space for management and luggage storage. The space is currently the mail room. Right of the elevators is a thin stair leading to the original tea room. All of these stairs have pink marble treads and risers. In the 1925 alterations, the stairs were outfitted with new “delightful” pointed arch. The arched openings are framed with fluted pilasters whose capitals recall the exterior terra cotta entry ornament.

A suspended plaster ceiling hangs approximately 12” below the second floor slab. The large columns’ plaster mushroom caps and the ceiling’s crown molding consists of a continuous square spiral, rosettes and Acanthus motif. At one time, the lobby windows were furnished with plush curtains and, above a suspended ceiling, the faux-bronzed valances that once surrounded the windows can be found.

The lobby floor consist of gray terrazzo panels framed by a mosaic of one-inch ceramic tile colored muted shades of green, red, tan, white, yellow and gray. The floor’s grid is offset 45° from the columns. The primary “walls have been redecorated with stone effect of Tiffany” by creating grooves in the plaster.

**Radio Room & Tea Room:** Per Diana James, in her book *Shared Walls*, “setting up a radio room was equivalent to wiring for high-speed internet or cable television in contemporary apartment buildings.” In 1925, the new owners of the Cambridge extended an existing mezzanine floor further into the Lobby. Below the mezzanine floor, the lobby floor was sunken four steps and, with the low ceiling, created a new intimate Radio Room - a space, according to *Hotel News of the West*, “created out of thin air” and “a true delight.” On the outside wall of the radio room was a gas log fireplace. Located today inside an office closet, the firebox surround and hearth has pink terra cotta tile recalling the building’s exterior ornament. The mantel and flanking cabinets are ivory painted wood with classical repeating acanthus and garland detail. Two small windows above the fireplace provide daylight.

Above the radio room on the new mezzanine floor, was the location of the Cambridge’s tea room with kitchen built above the tea room. Access to the tea room was from a flight of stairs from the lobby and a street door on Ninth Ave. Compared to the lobby, the detail of the tea room was restrained. A low ceiling is divided down the middle by a wide box-beam. Each space is framed with a concave crown mold. Detailing in the hallway space between the kitchen and tea room reinforces the new lobby’s shallow pointed-arch theme. Per the *Hotel News of the West*, both the tea room and radio room were fully carpeted.

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<sup>2</sup> “What New Furnishings Have Done for Cambridge,” *Hotel News of the West*, October 17, 1925.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

Floors Two through Ten:

Corridors and Stairs: Floors two through ten are arranged in a L-shape with a stair at each end and a central stair at the center near the elevators. The two end stairs have plain pipe rail handrails. The central stair, which once opened directly to the corridors, has a decorative steel newel and picket railing with a wood handrail on top. The two elevators open onto the corridor – one on each leg of the L. The corridors at the units are 5'-6" wide and become wider at the elevators. Most corridor walls are of solid 3" plaster construction. The plaster ceiling is applied directly to the concrete slab and concrete beams. Lining both sides of the corridor ceiling, the beams, in combination with crown molding, create a coved ceiling effect. These beams disappear at the eleventh floor. Here a plaster ceiling is suspended below the concrete roof structure creating an attic space that varies from 3'-0" to 3'-6" in height. The unit doors are the original two-paneled wood doors that have been covered on the Corridor side with gypsum board to create a higher fire rating. Adjacent to the doors are package cabinets. Common in many Seattle apartments of this era, they aided in the pick-up and delivery of mail, parcels, groceries, etc. Seen as a breach of the corridor walls fire rating, the cabinets are no longer allowed by code and have been covered in gypsum board as well. While not functional from the corridor, the wood trim is intact.

Units: All apartments were designed as two-room studio units with a large living/bedroom area with a large window and small kitchen with a smaller window. A bathroom and a large storage closet (with the delivery cabinet intact) flanked the unit entry. The closet has two doors – one entry door facing the bathroom and another larger door that held the Murphy-style hide-away bed. All rooms have painted door and window trim, picture mold and baseboards. The unit has oak hardwood floors except the closet which has fir. The hexagonal ceramic tile bathroom floor has a white field with a gray dashed border. Originally designed to function as an apartment hotel, all rooms were equipped with kitchens with wood cabinets and gas ranges. Units are heated with a steam radiator system that is mostly intact.

Alterations:

Union Street and Ninth Ave. Elevations: Except the windows, the primary elevations are relatively unaltered. The original wood sashes were removed in the 1983 and replaced with a triparted steel-framed windows with insulated glazing. Original wood frames with brick mold trim were retained and wood sills have been covered with sheet metal flashing. The original entry door and side lites were replaced in 1983 with contemporary aluminum storefront. The 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue entry to the tea room (door and side lites), was converted to a window in 1987. "The Cambridge" rooftop sign was removed sometime in the 1970s. It still appears in some aerial photos taken after the construction of I-5<sup>3</sup>. A non-original Art Deco styled neon sign was installed at an unknown time, but, potentially in concert with the removal of the rooftop sign. The neon sign is installed at the northwest - closer to street level view.

Courtyard Elevations: Except for the windows, these secondary elevations are relatively unaltered. The original wood sashes were removed in 1983 and replaced with a similar type as the primary elevations.

Lobby, Radio Room and Tea Room: Despite the fact the public spaces been subdivided, the original lobby plan and features are primarily intact. In 1983, two offices were created using the radio room and the northwest corner of the lobby. Walls and ceilings were built without destroying the original plaster trim and features. The

<sup>3</sup> Item #77764, Seattle Municipal Archives Photograph Collection

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

original radio room is an office with cedar plank walls with portions of the original ceiling and plaster trim visible. The office floor is framed above the original slab-on-grade – probably because of moisture issues. The original room's fireplace and cabinets are located inside a closet. Plaster ceiling trim and bronze window valances can still be found above the suspended acoustic ceiling of the larger office. The eastern section of the lobby was walled off in 1983 and connected to a mezzanine unit by inserting a metal stair. Like the offices, the terrazzo floor is covered with carpet and the ceiling trim in this space is still visible and intact. The original desk/storage space between the stairs and elevator still has the scored plaster walls and modern mailboxes were installed for residents. At the mezzanine level, a new wall with a large pocket door was installed under the tea room's large box beam creating two rooms: living and bedroom for a manager's unit. The unit's kitchen is in the original tea room kitchen space. Original crown molding and arch details are intact in the tea room spaces.

*Corridors:* The corridors and stairs are mostly intact with the unit doors, package cabinets and wood trim still in place. The corridors have carpet and the stairs are exposed concrete landings, treads and risers. On the two upper most floors, the ceiling, including the wood molding has been covered with a textured spray. Some additional molding has been added near the ceiling in an attempt to hide new conduit and cabling. Light fixtures in the corridors have been replaced. A new fire-rated wall separates the central stair and Corridor.

*Units:* The typical unit plan remains mostly unaltered. Of the original 157 units, 12 were combined to create one-bedroom units – primarily by cutting a door into a unit demising wall and removing one kitchen. In some of the original studios, the small doors, between the living spaces and the kitchen, have been enlarged to create a pass-thru type opening. All Murphy-style beds have been removed. Wood floors have been refinished in a small number of units, but carpet has been installed over most of them.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT

**Period of Significance**

1923-1925

**Significant Dates**

1923

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Ford, Sherwood (Architect)

Rounds-Clist Company (Builder)

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Cambridge Apartments in Seattle, Washington are historically significant under Criteria A as defined by the *Seattle Apartment Buildings 1900-1957* MPD for its connections to the broad patterns of development and growth of the city. As the first major Apartment Hotel built in the city, the apartments represent the dramatic economic growth of Seattle and the rise of the apartment block as a building type during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Apartment blocks provided a viable housing type for a wider variety of income levels in the city. The Cambridge Apartments also represents the city's ambition and ability to expand to surrounding neighborhoods and in a vertical direction – transforming First Hill and Downtown.

The Cambridge Apartments are also is significant under Criteria C as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its type, period and method of construction. At the time of construction, the Cambridge Apartments were noted as the first concrete high-rise apartment building in the city. The *Seattle Times* lauded the Cambridge as a “largest of its kind in the city”<sup>4</sup> even before its completion in 1923. Described by the *Seattle Times* as a “splendid”<sup>5</sup> classically detailed modern structure, it is an intact example of a modern building in Classical Revival style. Furthermore the apartments represent the work of noted Seattle architect, Sherwood Ford. The Period of Significance begins in 1923, the date of construction of the building, and ends in 1925 the year the first floor lobby was altered.

**Seattle & First Hill Development**

Seattle's wealthiest residents and prominent pioneer families started settling First Hill, a neighborhood to the east of Downtown, to escape from a rapidly growing boomtown below. The first “mansion” on the hill was built by Colonel Granville O. Haller in 1883 at Minor Avenue and James Street and was known as “Castlemount.” It was quickly followed by a very large and ornate Late Victorian residence at Boren Avenue and Madison Street, the home of the Morgan Carkeek family. Mrs. Carkeek's friend, Mrs. Martin Van Buren Stacy, immediately purchased the property across the street, and by 1890 Judge Hanford had built a third house at this intersection. Although other types of residential properties were also represented on the hill – small vernacular houses, duplexes, row houses, and flats - the large mansions quickly characterized the neighborhood as the “first” closest hill to downtown where the “first” families lived.<sup>6</sup>

What passed for high society in pioneer Seattle was established on First Hill. The city's first tennis court was created and gave rise to the Seattle Tennis Club, now located on the shores of Lake Washington. The men of First Hill founded the exclusive Rainier Club in 1888, though for purposes of conducting business its building was located in the main commercial district.

By 1890 the Madison Street cable car line brought easy access to the hill and apartment buildings, hotels and hospitals clustered along the Madison spine. The first sign of First Hill's high-rise future began at the top of the hill in 1907 with the construction of the Perry Hotel – replacing one of the first homes at Boren and Madison. In 1909, a residential hotel, the Sorrento, opened on Madison. Yet, single family houses continued to be built on the hill well into the first decade of the new century, even as the character of the neighborhood was changing and some of the early residents were relocating to nearby Capitol Hill and the new private enclave at The Highlands north of the city.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “Building Record Made,” *Seattle Times*, December 31, 1922.

<sup>5</sup> “Splendid Apartment Ready for Tenants” April 1, 1923.

<sup>6</sup> Courtois, Shirley, Dearborn House National Register Nomination Form, 1997

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

The poorly kept secret of First Hill's spectacular views and proximity to downtown was attractive to more of Seattle's population and sparked the construction of apartment houses, boarding houses and apartment-hotels in the first decades on the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The west side of the hill sported the best views and the Cambridge Apartment-Hotel was the first of the multi-family structures to form this west boundary of the hill. Its ten stories towered over 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Union Street providing views past downtown to the Olympics, Puget Sound and Lake Union. Today, First Hill is characterized by high-rise buildings, primarily apartments, condominiums and medical facilities whose spread over several contiguous blocks both north and south of Madison.

Still physically close, First Hill's symbolic proximity to Downtown was severed in 1962 with the construction of Interstate 5 (I-5). Its construction resulted in the demolition of densely developed areas and severing walking routes for First Hill residents. I-5's path cut directly adjacent to edge of First Hill and the Cambridge Apartments. The building, still with views of the Olympic Mountains, Lake Union and the Puget Sound, now was perched over a long stretch of concrete. In an effort to "stitch" back together the city and the pedestrian routes, Freeway Park was built in 1976 on a lid that spanned over the I-5. However, as part of the park's construction, a parking garage cut 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue from First Hill and demolished the 6-story Normandie Apartments (1915) across 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. In 1986, the Washington State Convention Center was built adjacent to Freeway Park and also spanned over I-5. The result of I-5, Freeway Park and the convention center was the Cambridge being visibly and physically disconnected between Downtown and First Hill. The Cambridge, now surrounded by the concrete walls of Freeway Park and the convention center, no longer offers the views the residents once enjoyed.

### **Apartments and Apartment-Hotels**

Apartments as a building type emerged during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in America, and thus coincided with the major growth periods of Seattle. Early high-income apartment dwellings and family-oriented flats are represented by many buildings on First and Queen Anne Hills. The term "apartment house" was used initially to describe middle-class multi-family housing with hot and cold running water, a full kitchen and bathroom, living spaces, operable windows, and a recognized discrete address.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, with boarding houses or tenements, typically associated with lower income populations and included shared bathrooms and running water. As grouped dwellings, apartments featured semi-public, common entries and circulation spaces. At a minimum, shared spaces included entries, stairs and corridors. In more complex properties, shared amenities included a laundry room and later a garage or private parking lot. Upper-income buildings provided ground level or rooftop gardens, more spacious lobbies and elevators, meeting rooms, libraries and swimming pools. Elevators were added initially to upscale buildings and those over four stories, while walk-up units typified buildings for middle and lower income residents.

Beginning in the 1920's in Seattle, apartment-hotels were also popular with upper and middle class residents. Apartment-hotels came from the demand of tourists and long-term temporary urban residents who wanted the privacy and space of an apartment but some of the amenities of hotel, including a concierge and dining rooms. The buildings, with their plush lobbies and dining rooms were based on hotels like the Sorrento (1909) and the Perry (1909) on First Hill. These well-designed buildings promoted spacious, house-like flats. The apartment-hotel on the East Coast typically resembled an upper-class boarding house and tenants took meals in public dining rooms. In Seattle, apartments-hotels provided public food services, but the apartments typically included a kitchen – hoping to increase the amount of time a tourist stayed in Seattle.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, Christine, Ranches, Rowhouses & Railroad Flats, pg. 210-212.

<sup>9</sup> James, Diana, Shared Walls, pg. 72.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

Postcards with images and information about these buildings were a creative way to advertise the apartment-hotel. They provide the residents with an amenity (a type of communication to relatives or friends) while also showing off images of furnished apartments or luxurious lobbies and promoting their hospitality. “This am the joint” wrote Bert to presumably another family member in Wisconsin. In another Cambridge postcard, the hotel is described as the “House of Courtesy.”

Building plans evolved in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with double loaded corridors or multiple-core building plans accessed simple units with single exterior exposures. Courtyards and light wells provided improved light and ventilation in larger buildings. After ca. 1910, there emerged smaller and efficiency-style apartments. Available either furnished or unfurnished, a typical efficiency unit plan consisted of two primary rooms - a living/dining room and compact kitchen – with a full bathroom and a sizable closet, typically with convertible Murphy bed to serve as sleeping quarters.

In Seattle, apartments and apartment-hotels appeared to be a solution to a booming city with high demand for housing. In 1922, the *Seattle Times* wrote that all yearly construction records in Seattle were broken” and that “building permit valuations totaled \$19,784,010”<sup>10</sup> exceeding the previous record during the construction boom of the Alaskan Yukon Exposition in 1909. Listing several important projects, the article heralds the Cambridge as the “largest building of its kind in the city” and announces confidence that 1923 will exceeded the \$20,000,000 mark.

These elaborately designed apartment buildings used and advertised the modern high-quality construction techniques feature “fire-proof” concrete and masonry walls, ornate terra cotta trim, and elevators. The evolution in building construction was aiding the design of taller, more dense structures. In 1923, the *Seattle Daily Times* described how the current demand for housing was changing the Seattle skyline. Chief among these changes was “the Cambridge, with its ten stories.”<sup>11</sup>

By 1925, the demand for apartment accommodations in Seattle appeared to still be exceeding supply. As the City’s Building Superintendent Robert Proctor noted in the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* that year, “the phenomenal apartment house . . . development experienced last year was the result of delayed activity in that line, just as how an active hotel construction program is needed to even up the lean years of the past. Investors have avoided hotel development for several years so that now this city is behind with that type of housing”<sup>12</sup> This report dates from two years after the Cambridge opened suggesting market conditions may have been a determinant in its construction. Construction of other apartment-hotels followed throughout the decade, including the Nordcliffe (1925, destroyed), Piedmont (1926, now Tuscany Apartments), Camlin Hotel (1926), Rhododendron (1927), and Olive Tower (1928).<sup>13</sup> The same competitive market conditions may also have encouraged the revisions Maltby-Thurston and its managers made to the Cambridge in 1925 – just two years after its construction – including the addition of the Radio Room.

**Architect: Sherwood D. Ford**

The Cambridge Apartments were designed by Sherwood Diemer Ford (1872-1948). Ford is known for many prominent commissions in Washington State during the economic boom of the 1920’s. His most notable commissions include the Marcus Whitman Hotel (1928) in Walla Walla, the Washington Athletic Club (1929-30) and the Mayflower/ Fox Theater (1927-28, Music Hall Theater, destroyed.) both in Seattle.

<sup>10</sup> “Building Record Made,” *Seattle Times*, December 31, 1922.

<sup>11</sup> “Need for Living Accommodations Becomes Apparent, High Class Structures”, *Seattle Times*, September 30, 1923

<sup>12</sup> City of Seattle, Landmarks Preservation Board, Report on Designation, Wilsonian Apartments, 4700-4710 University Way, Oct. 5, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> James, Diana, Shared Walls, pg. 72.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

Ford was born in England in 1872. He came to North America in the mid-1890s and worked in Montreal and Boston for Hartwell, Richardson & Driver. Upon moving to Seattle in 1907, Ford joined the firm of Graham & Myers, focusing on single-family residential design. After the dissolution of that firm, Ford continued to work with Graham. When John Graham relocated to Detroit in 1914, Ford formed a partnership with James E. Webster and they took over Graham's northwest projects until 1916.<sup>14</sup> Ford applied for US citizenship in 1915 and was naturalized on March 13, 1920. Prominent businessman/financier, William D. Comer served as one of the witness for Sherwood through naturalization process<sup>15</sup> – underscoring what would become a crucial relationship in his architectural career for the next decade. In 1929 Ford was elected president of the Washington State Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. According to the Washington Death Index, he died at 78 on September 14, 1948.

Sherwood Ford's buildings demonstrate his innovative ability to work with several architectural styles popular in the twenties and thirties. The Music Hall Theatre was described as an "exotic Moorish-Spanish Renaissance Revival design" illustrated with its ticket booth with Moorish stylings including arched windows and decorative iron grillwork.<sup>16</sup> The Washington Athletic Club is a more restrained Art Deco design utilizing organic cast stone ornamentation. On the Classical Revival Marcus Whitman Hotel, Ford successfully utilizes classical detailing on a modern high-rise structure.

### **General Contractor: Rounds-Clist Co.**

“The effects of Seattle’s monster building program<sup>17</sup>” of the 1920 appears to have been a pivotal period for the Cambridge Apartment builder, Rounds-Clist Company. The partnership was formed between Edgar J. Rounds (1865-1929) and Walter Mark Clist (1880-1952) in the early teen. Rounds was born in Wisconsin; and, after working in the mid-west railroad industry, relocated to Seattle in 1891 and worked as a general contractor with Pickarts & Company. By 1893, he had established his own general contractor office, E.J. Rounds, which was responsible for building the First Methodist Church (1907) in Downtown Seattle. Rounds died at the age of 64, a few years after the Round-Clist completed the Roundcliff Apartments on Seattle’s Capitol Hill. The building was named for him<sup>18</sup>. His partner, Walter Mark Clist, was born in London and spent his primary years in Spokane, Washington. Clist was the head of the Northwest Chapter of the Associated General Contractors in 1922. After Rounds’ death in 1929, Clist continued to run the office (under the Rounds-Clist name) until he retired and liquidated the company in 1944. Clist relocated to Laguna Beach and died there in 1952. The Rounds-Clist Company was the general contractor business responsible for numerous major large-scale building construction projects scattered throughout Washington State including Seattle’s Roosevelt High School (1922), Chamber of Commerce Building (1924), Orpheum Theater (1927, destroyed) and Paramount Theater (1927-1928); the Washington Building in Tacoma (1925); the Morck Hotel (1923) in Aberdeen; and the Paulson Medical Center (1929) and the Culmstock Arms Apartments (1928-29) in Spokane.

### **Real Estate Improvement Co., Inc. (1917-1931)**

The Cambridge Apartments were financed by the Real Estate Improvement Company, a prominent business investment firm in Seattle during the 1920s. According to incorporation records, the Real Estate Improvement Co. was first licensed to do business in Seattle on October 1, 1917 and, based on new articles and

<sup>14</sup> Kadas, Marianne, “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Marcus Whitman Hotel,” October, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Pacific Coast Architecture Database website, “Ford, Sherwood.”

<sup>16</sup> Kane, Karen, “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Fox Theater,” October, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> “Trucks in Big Demand,” Seattle Daily Times, 1924.

<sup>18</sup> City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods, Inventory Summary for 845 Bellevue Ave., 2006.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

advertisements, was responsible for numerous projects throughout Washington State during the boom period of the 1920s. The founding trustees are listed as William D. Comer (a mortgage loan officer), S.W. Farquhar (a lawyer) and George A. Bruce (assistant secretary of Washington Savings and Loan Association).<sup>19</sup> According to *Seattle Times* articles about the Cambridge in 1922 & 1923, George Hannum was President of the company during the time of the building's construction. However, no other information has been found about this "retired lumber merchant."<sup>20</sup> President of Mutual Saving & Loan, Comer was listed as a pioneer of the mortgage loan business in 1924 and appears to be an important figure in Seattle's boom period of the 1920's. In 1925, the company's articles of incorporation were amended to increase their capital to \$5,000,000. This change preceded a list of important projects involving the Real Estate Improvement Co. including the Windham Apartments (1926) in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood and the Whitworth Apartments (1926) on Seattle's Capitol Hill.

This financing/development activity also included two important projects with Sherwood Ford: the Marcus Whitman (1927) in downtown Walla Walla and the Mayflower Theater (aka Fox, Music Hall, 1928, destroyed). Furthermore, in 1929, W.D. Comer was also recruited to head the development of the Washington Athletic Club once the first development plan had failed. Comer formed a new Board (that included Severt Thurston of Maltby-Thurston), assumed the role of Board President, provided the property at Sixth and Union in downtown Seattle, and hired Ford to design the new facility.<sup>21</sup> In 1927, the Real Estate Improvement Co. announced plans for a new theater at Seventh and Olive in Seattle with Ford as the architect. However, by 1928, the company had run out of funding and the theater project was sold.<sup>22</sup>

The beginning of the Great Depression appears to be the end of Comer's and the company's building era. By 1931, W.D. Comer was on trial for falsifying financial statements and, his company, Real Estate Improvement Co. was "hopelessly insolvent"<sup>23</sup> and was liquidated through bankruptcy proceedings.

### Maltby-Thurston Hotels (1923-1931)

The partnership of Severt W. Thurston (1885-1968) and H.E. Maltby took over operating control (but apparently not ownership) of the Cambridge Apartments in 1926 – two years after its construction. Unlike the owners of the Cambridge, the partnership would survive the Depression, evolve and flourish. In 1927, Maltby-Thurston Hotels was organized and Severt acted as the company's president. At the time of incorporation, it controlled The President Hotel in Mt. Vernon; the New Richmond, the Waldorf and Wilhard Hotels in Seattle; and the Lewis-Clark Hotel in Centralia. In fact the company partnered with Real Estate Improvement Co. several times to develop several buildings. After their construction they operated the Cambridge and the Marcus Whitman Hotel in Walla Walla.

The Great Depression had a crippling effect on hotel businesses. In 1930, after an "unexpected"<sup>24</sup> meeting in Yakima, Severt Thurston, Frank Dupar and the Schmidt Brothers (Peter and Adolph) agreed to operate their three hotel companies as the Western Hotels Group with 17 sites in Washington State and one in Idaho. The hotels the Western Hotel Group operated are an important list of the most prominent architecture and luxurious hotels in Washington State and include the Davenport in Spokane; and the New Washington Hotel, Roosevelt and Olympic Hotel in Seattle. All the properties were finally merged into a single corporate structure in 1958.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, Rhoda & Sonja Sokol Furesz, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Windham Apartments," April, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> *Sketches of Washingtonians*, Domestic Engineering, May 6, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> City of Seattle, *Report on Designation, Washington Athletic Club*, March 11, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Kane, Karen, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Fox Theater," Seattle, October, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> "Another Comer Firm Goes to Receiver," *Seattle Times*, November 16, 1931.

<sup>24</sup> *Wikipedia* website, "Westin Hotels and Resorts."

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

In 1963, after rapid growth domestically and overseas, the company was renamed Western International Hotels. For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 1980, the name was changed to Westin Hotels & Resorts. The company, based in Seattle until 1998, now currently is owned by Starwood Capital. They continue to operate over 190 sites worldwide.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

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- Inventory Summary for 903 Union St., 2006.
- Inventory Summary for 1325 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., 2006.

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"Will House Thousands," October 29, 1922

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"Alden Praised by Society for Work," November 28, 1926.

"\$160,000 Whitworth Apartments," July 5, 1927.

"Maltby & Thurston Hotel Company", October 6, 1927.

"Incorporations," December 16, 1929.

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"Another Comer Firm Goes to Receiver," November 16, 1931.

"Witness Tells of \$24,345 Change in Comer Account," June 23, 1932.

"Syndicate Buys Hotel Interest of Marmaduke," March 27, 1937.

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County and State

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"Interstate 5 in Washington;"  
"Westin Hotels & Resorts."

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than an one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**      NAD 1927 or   X   NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing	3	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing
2	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing	4	<u>    </u> Zone	<u>    </u> Easting	<u>    </u> Northing

**Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>47°36'41.09"N</u> Latitude	<u>122°19'47.02"W</u> Longitude	3	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude
2	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude	4	<u>    </u> Latitude	<u>    </u> Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is located on Lots 1, 4 & 5, Block 109, of Denny's Broadway Addition to the City of Seattle, in King County, Washington. It is otherwise identified as Tax Parcel 197820-0225.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property encompasses the entire urban tax lot that is occupied by the Cambridge Apartments.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Andrew Phillips (Edited by DAHP)  
organization SMR Architects date January 2016  
street & number 911 Western Ave. #200 telephone 206-623-1104  
city or town Seattle State WA zip code 98104  
e-mail aphillips@smrarchitects.com

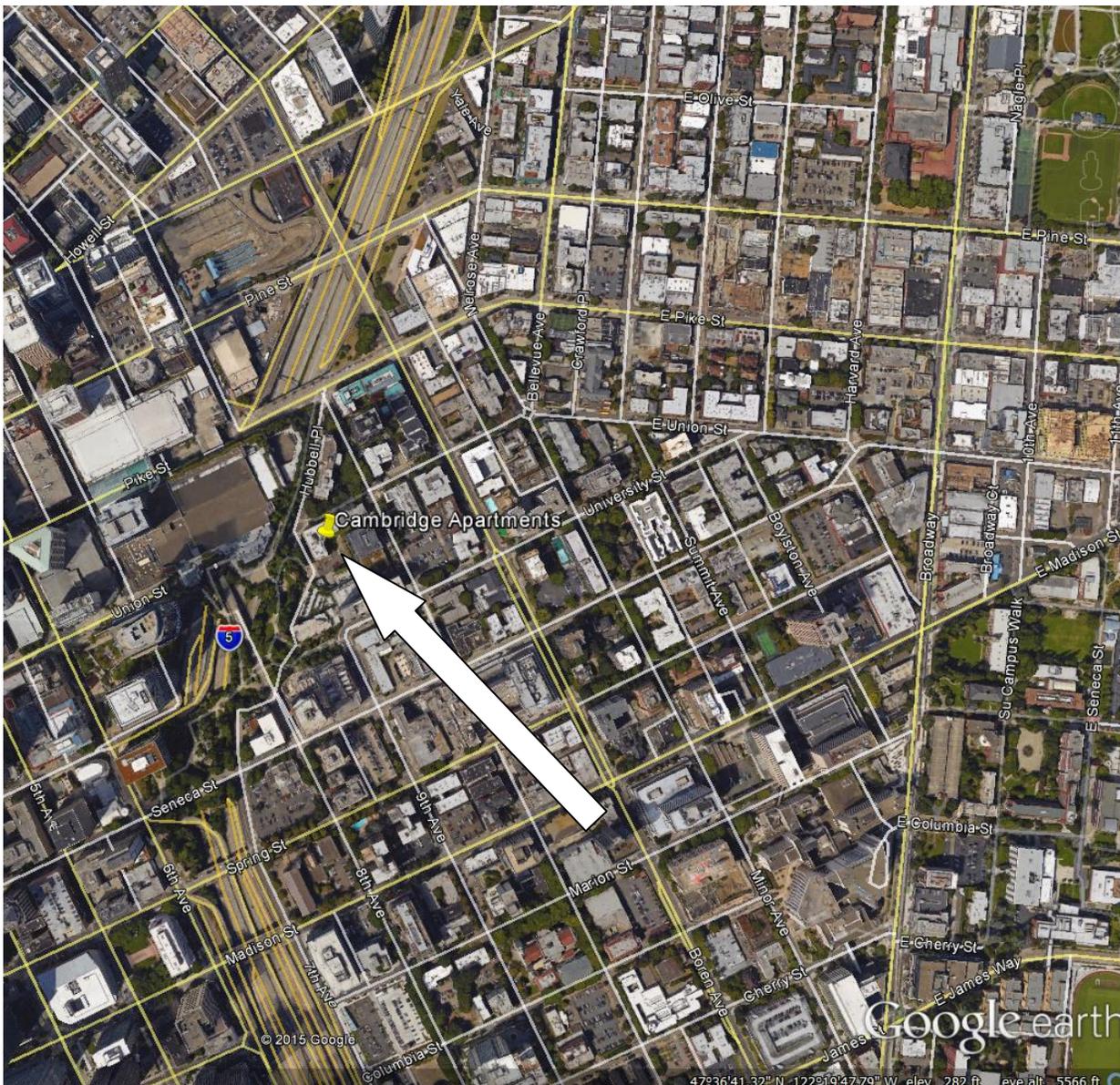
Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)



Google Earth - Edit Placemark

Name:  

Latitude:

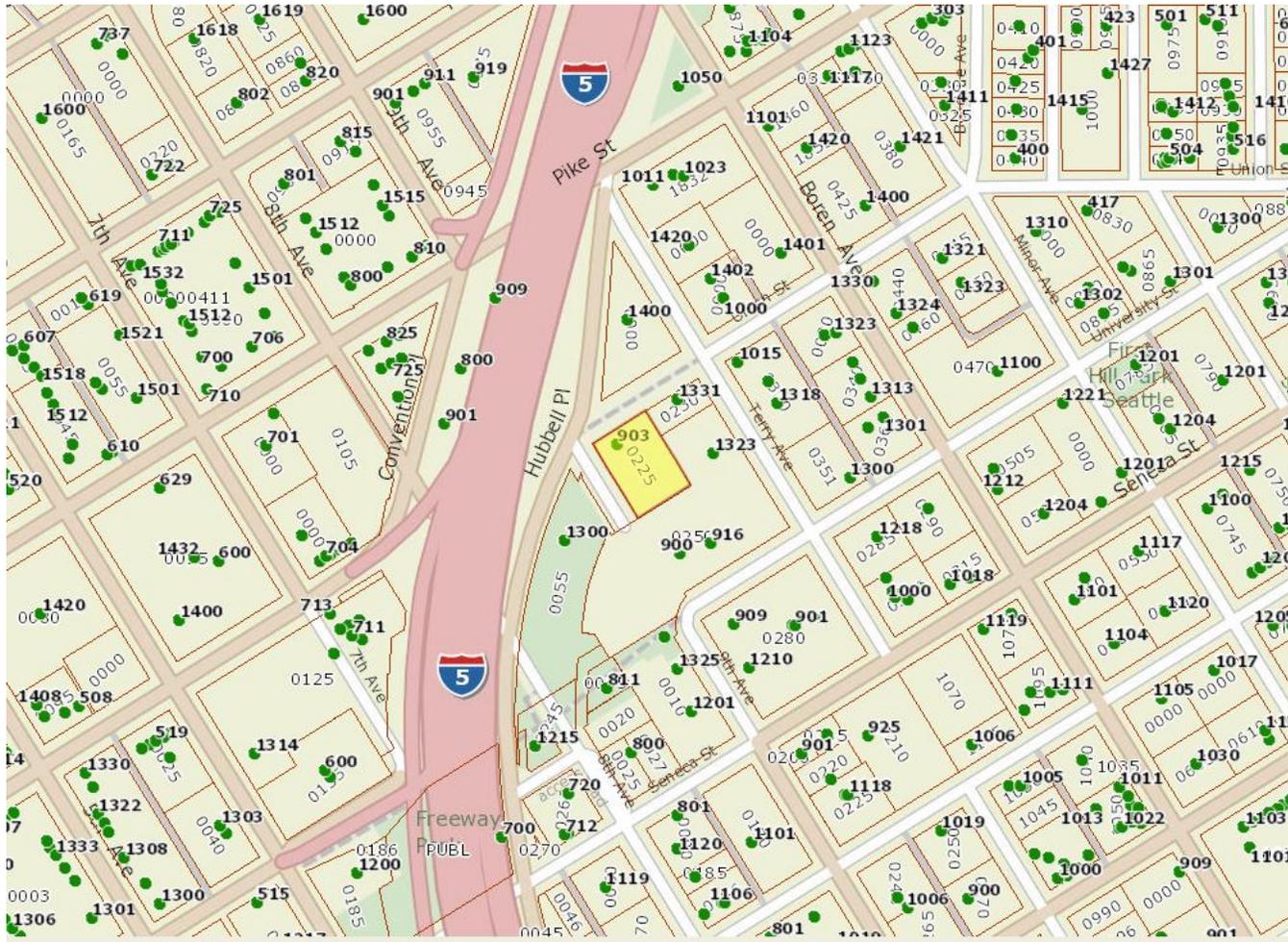
Longitude:

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

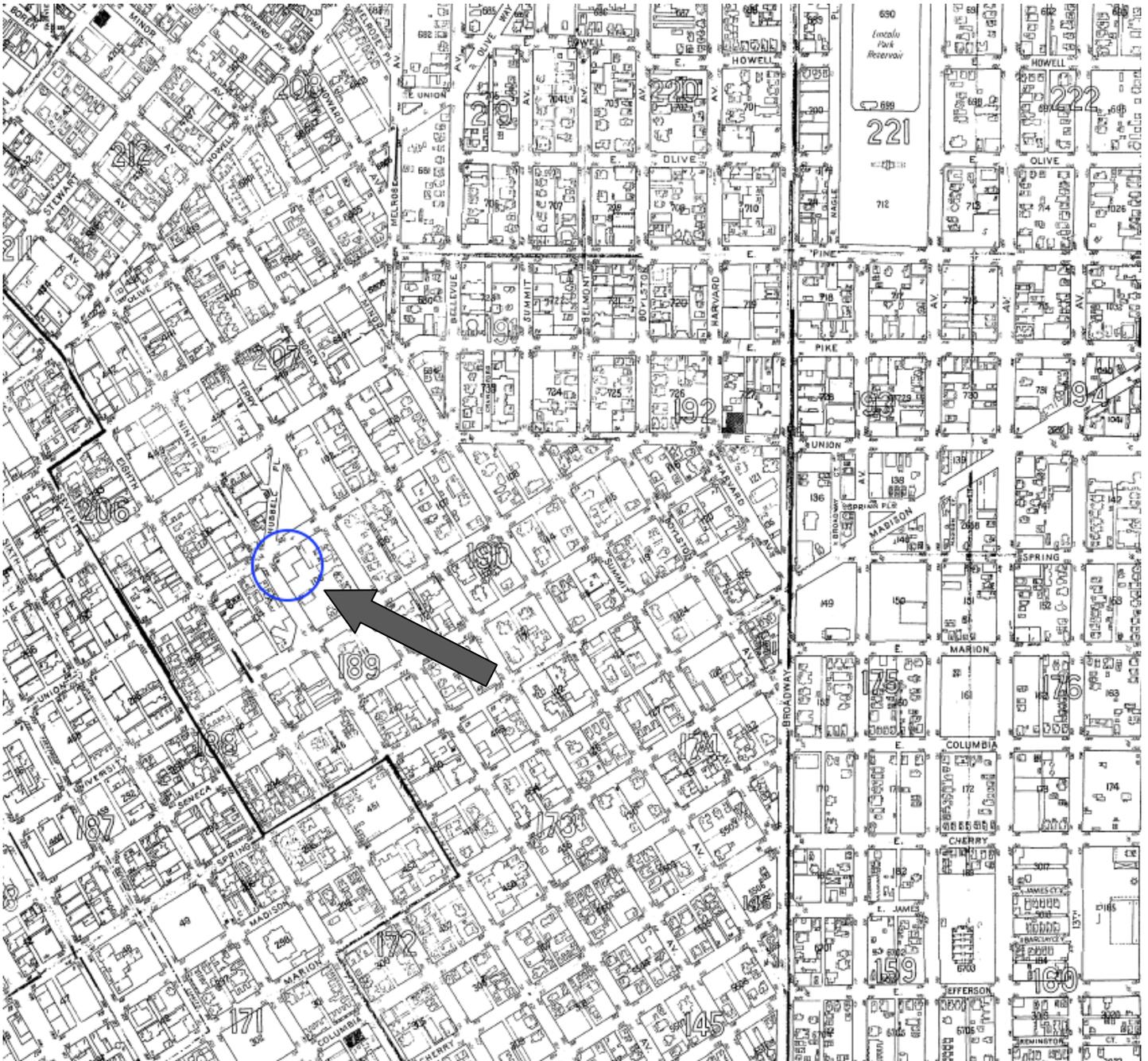


Current Parcel map showing the Cambridge with surrounding First Hill and Downtown neighborhoods, Interstate 5 & Freeway Park, GIS Maps, Department of Planning & Development, City of Seattle, 2015

Parcel Number - 197820-0225

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

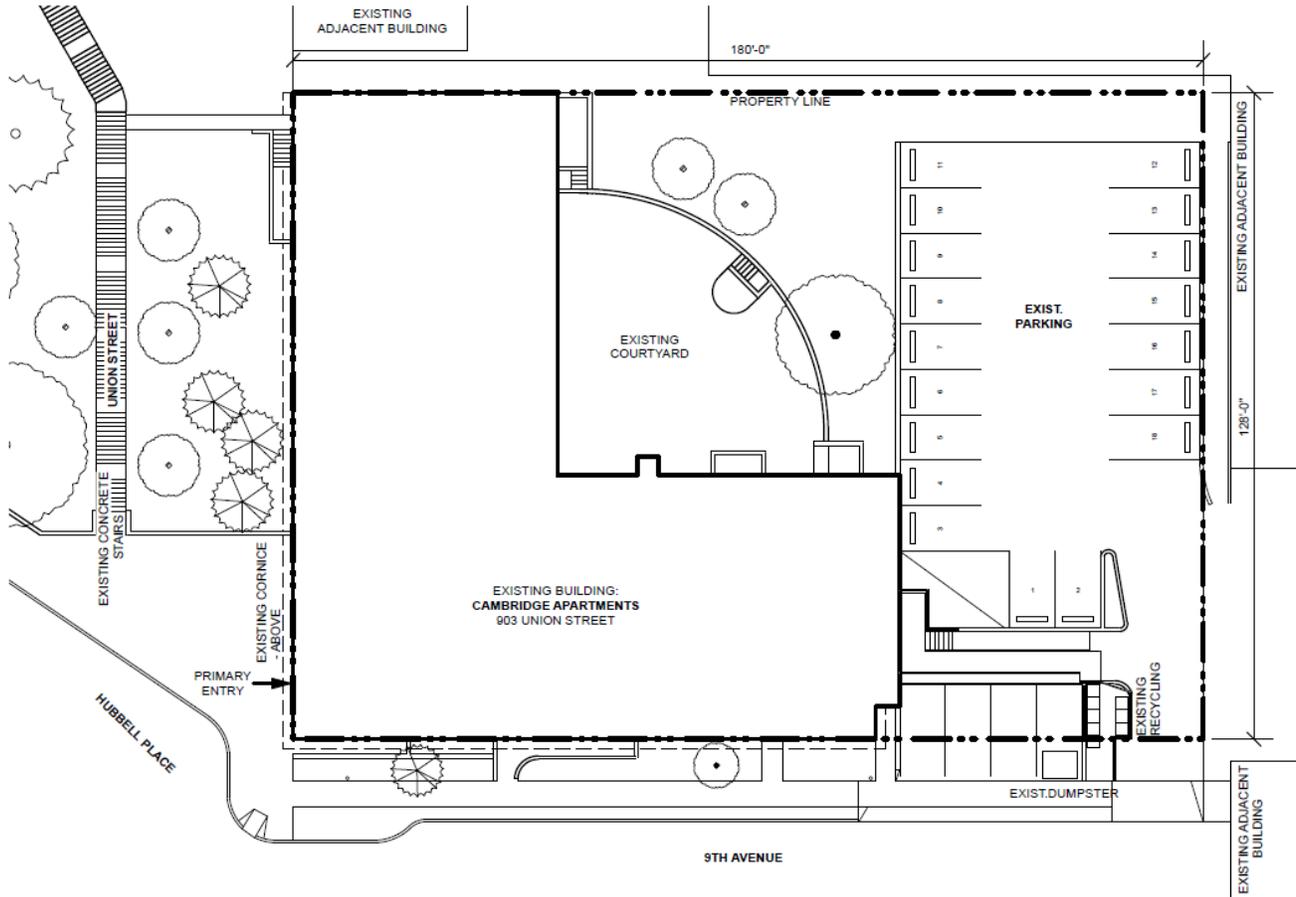
King County, Washington  
County and State



Sanborn Insurance Maps, Seattle, Vol. 1, 1905-1950

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



# THE CAMBRIDGE

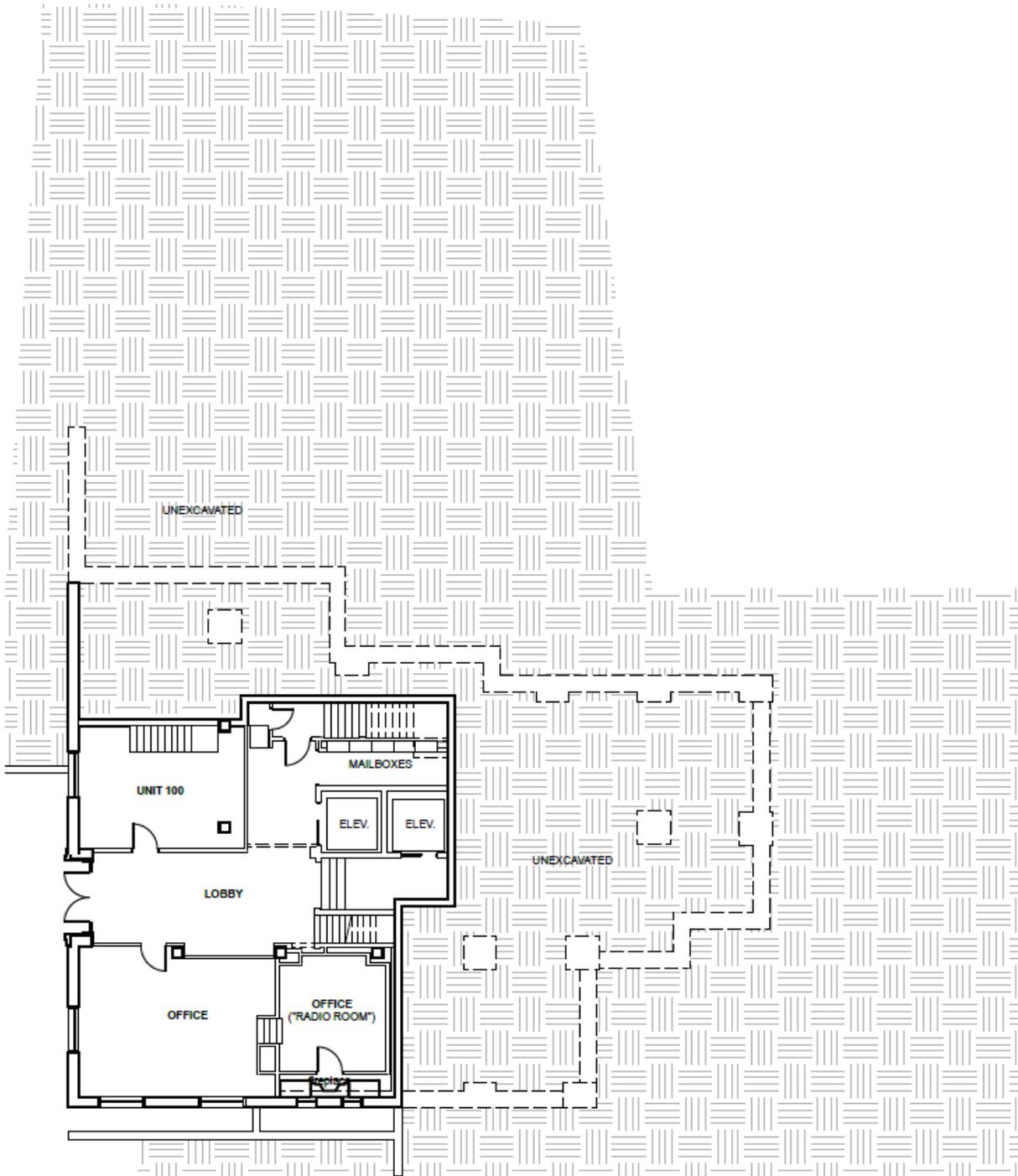
903 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101

## SITE PLAN



Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



# THE CAMBRIDGE

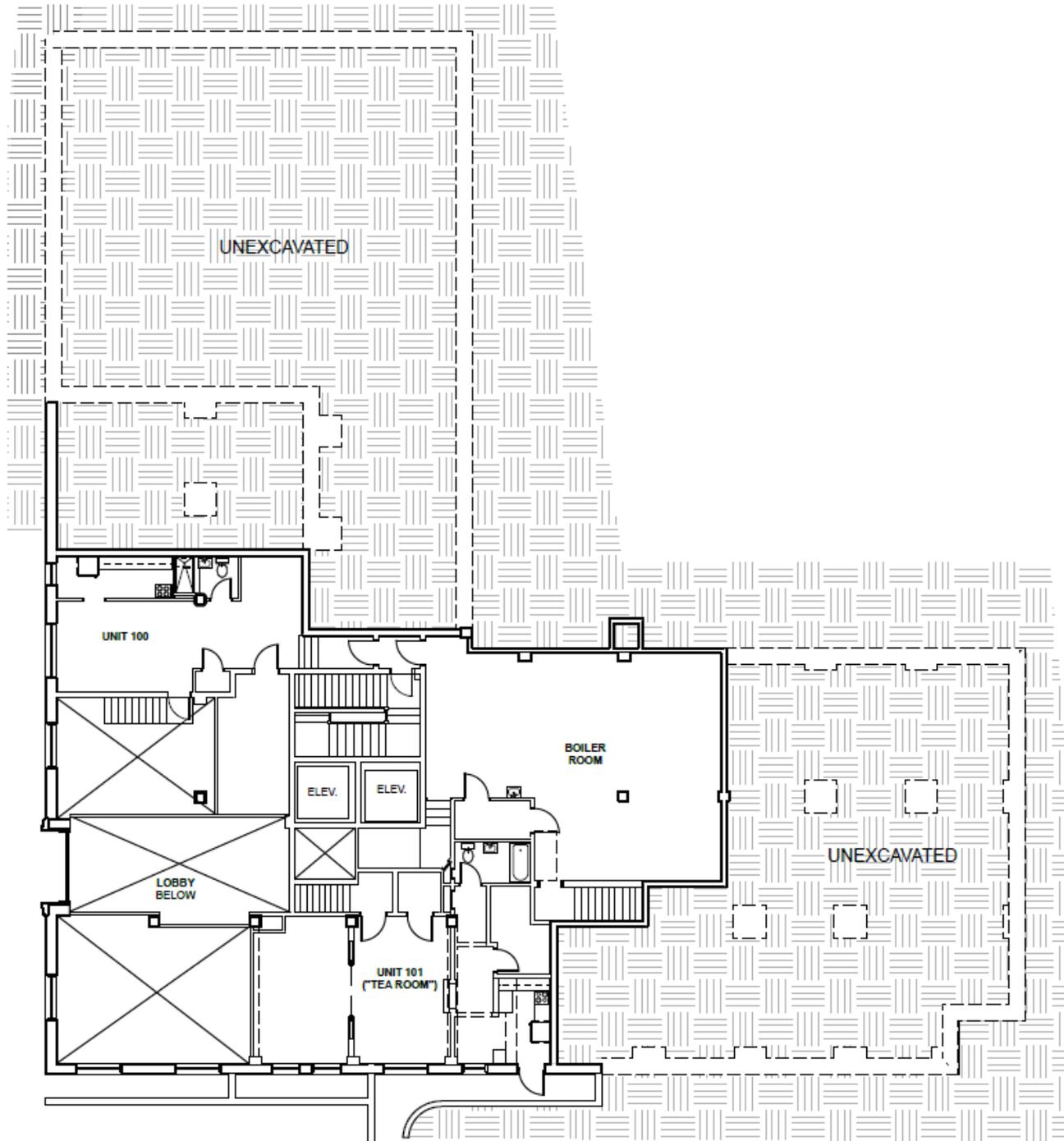
903 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



**THE CAMBRIDGE**  
903 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101

MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN



Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



**THE CAMBRIDGE**  
903 Union Street, Seattle, WA 98101

TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN  
0 10 20 FT



Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



View looking east on Union Street from 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, ca. 1923. The Cambridge's north and west elevations, with its original rooftop sign, is visible. The foreground buildings have demolished for Interstate 5 or Washington State Convention Center. (appears on DorpatSherrardLomont website: "Seattle Now & Then: Shared Walls," April 14, 2012).



View looking east from Union Street stairs towards Downtown prior to the Cambridge construction. 1916. View is from approx. 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor height of future building showing its prominence. (appears on DorpatSherrardLomont.com website: "Seattle Now & Then: Shared Walls," April 14, 2012).

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



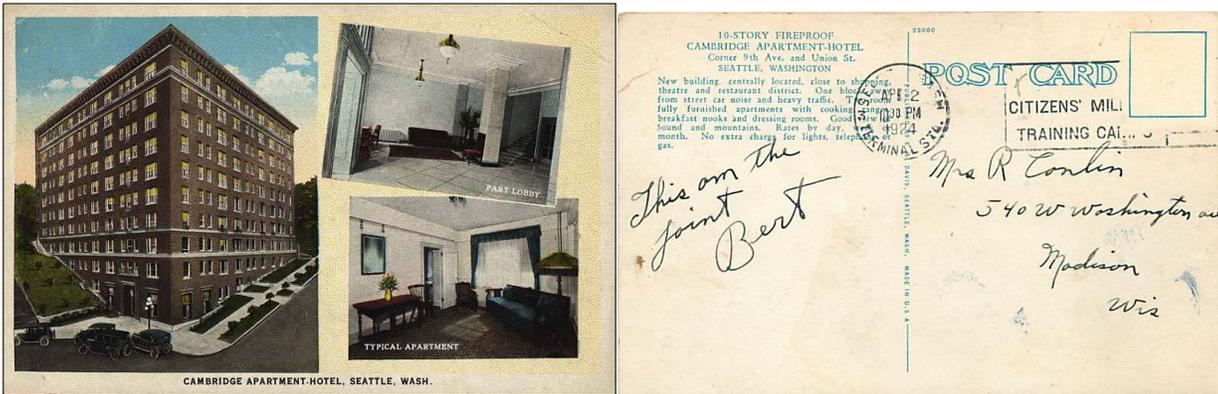
View looking southeast across Union Street & 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 1926. The Union Street stairs & Cambridge's north and west elevations, with its original rooftop sign, are visible. (Museum of History and Industry)



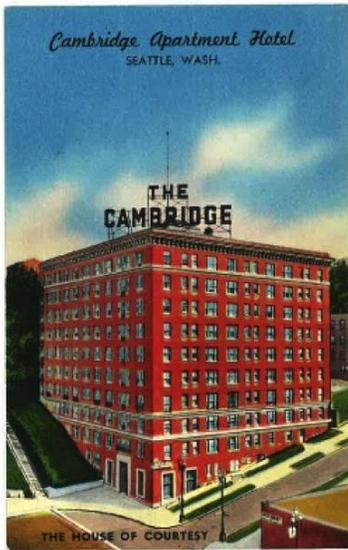
View from Cambridge rooftop looking northwest toward Downtown. Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound are visible, 1923. Tallest buildings visible are the New Washington Hotel, Securities Building and Broadacres. The foreground buildings have been demolished for Interstate 5 or Washington State Convention Center. (Museum of History and Industry).

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



The Cambridge Apartment Hotel postcard. Photos include: exterior looking southeast at north and west elevations, Lobby interior and interior of typical furnished residential unit. Postmarked April 2, 1924.



The Cambridge Apartment Hotel "House of Courtesy" postcard. No date/no postmark.

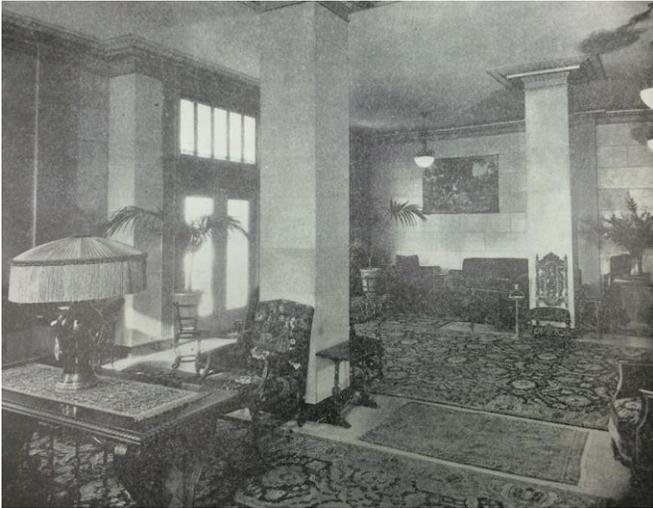


The Cambridge under construction, Cover Photo, Pacific Builder & Engineer, Volume 28, #43, "Build Reinforced Concrete Structures," 1922.

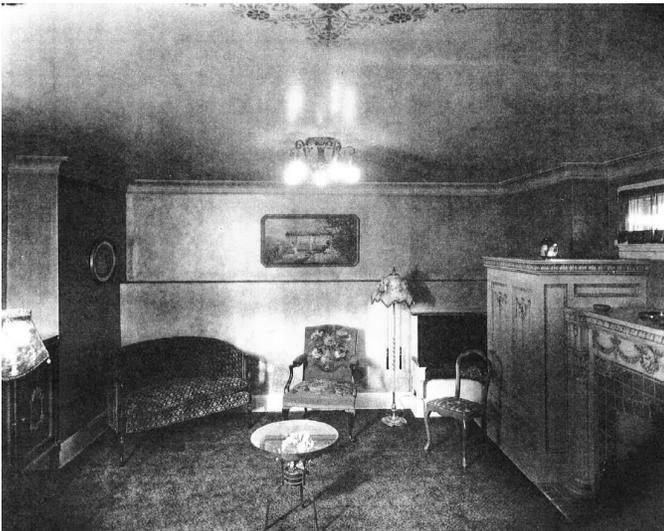
Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

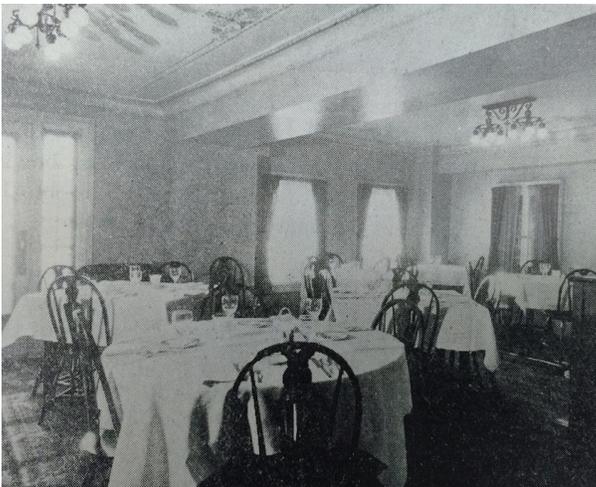
King County, Washington  
County and State



Interior of the Cambridge Lobby, Hotel News of the West, No. 42, "What New Furnishings Have Done for Cambridge," October 17, 1925.



Interior of the Cambridge Radio Room – fireplace to the right, Hotel News of the West, No. 42, "What New Furnishings Have Done for Cambridge," October 17, 1925.



Interior of the Cambridge Tea Room, Hotel News of the West, No. 42, "What New Furnishings Have Done for Cambridge," October 17, 1925.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Cambridge Apartments  
**City or Vicinity:** Seattle  
**County:** King **State:** WA  
**Photographer:** Andrew Phillips  
**Date Photographed:** November 17, 2015

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**



01. General site view and context, north elevation, looking west on Union Street stairs

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



0002. General site view and context, west & south elevations, looking north on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue.



0003. General site view and context, east courtyard elevation from parking looking west.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0004. General site view and context, south courtyard elevation from parking looking north.



0005. General site view and context, west elevation looking southeast.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



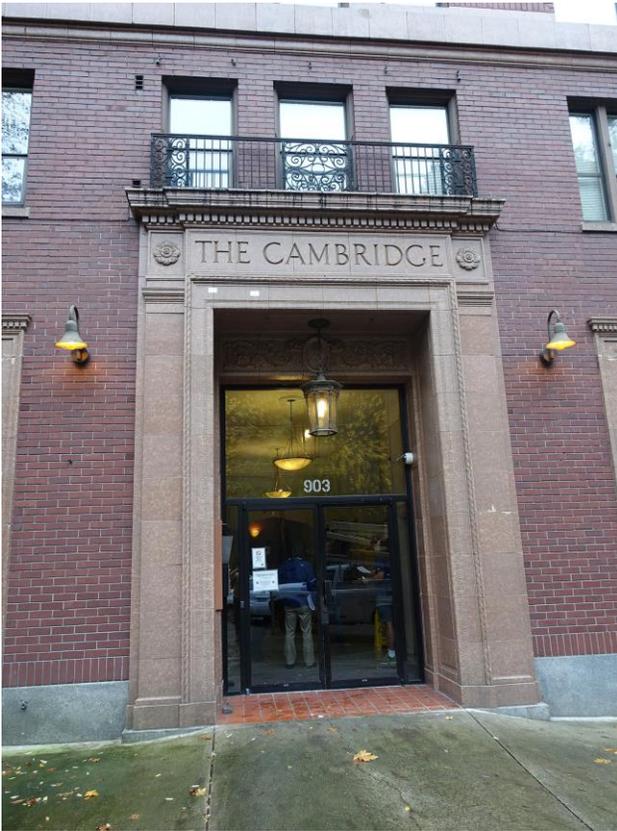
0006. Courtyard view, looking southeast.



0007. Primary entry, north elevation looking south.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



0008. Detail view of primary entry, north elevation looking south.



0009. Detail view of first floor window terra cotta surround, north elevation.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0010. Detail view of primary entry terra cotta surround & rosette, north elevation.



0011. Detail view of primary entry terra cotta surround, north elevation.

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



0012. Detail view of primary entry terra cotta & light, north elevation.



0013. Interior, view of Lobby looking north at primary entry.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0014. Interior, Lobby view, stairs to Mgr.'s Unit/Tea Room.



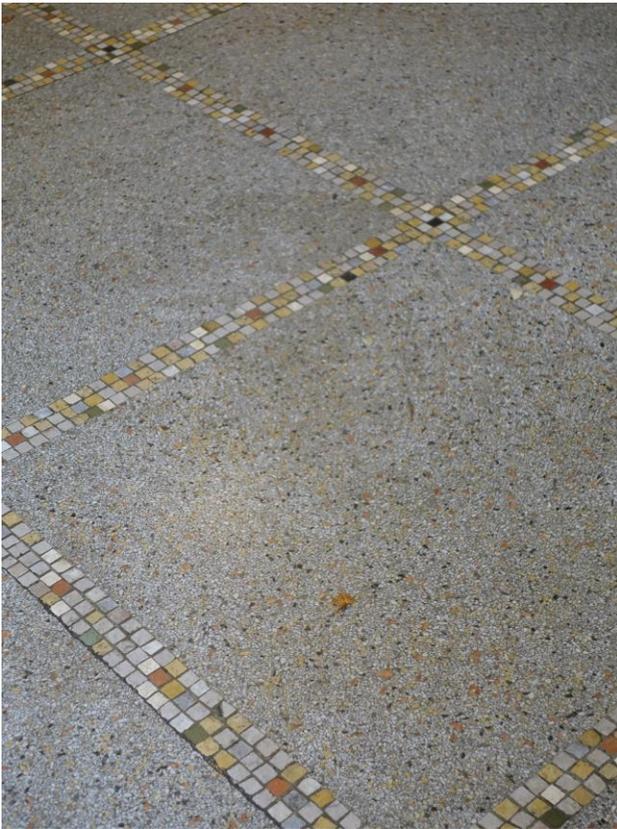
0015. Interior, detail view of ceiling at building lobby.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0016. Interior, detail view of terrazzo floor at building lobby.



0017. Interior, Lobby ceiling view (in Office, above acoustic ceiling).

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



0018. Interior, detail view of Lobby ceiling & window valance (in office, above acoustic ceiling).



0019. Interior, view of Radio Room fireplace & cabinets (in office closet).

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



0020. Interior, detail view of Radio Room fireplace mantel (in office closet).



0021. Interior, typical flight of stairs, central stair.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0022. Interior, typical residential Corridor.



0023. Interior, detail view of unit door & delivery cabinet, typical residential Corridor.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0024. Interior, typical residential unit, looking toward kitchen & exterior.



0025. Interior, typical residential unit, looking unit entry, bath & closet.

Cambridge Apartments

Name of Property

King County, Washington

County and State



0026. Interior, typical residential bath & tile floor.



0027. Interior, view of Manager's unit (former Tea Room).

Cambridge Apartments  
Name of Property

King County, Washington  
County and State



903 union

0028. Interior, view of Manager's unit & kitchen (former Tea Room).

---

**Property Owner:** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

---

name Jovan Ludovice, Senior Housing Developer, Bellwether Housing  
street & number 1651 Bellevue Avenue telephone 206-588-4796  
city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98122

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.