Welcome to Longview...where history lives!

Tour of Historic Downtown

1. Columbia River Mercantile Building, 1923*
   - 1305 Commerce Avenue
   - Popularly known as “The Mert,” Longview’s first downtown shopping center was R.A. Long’s “company store.” Built by the Long-Bell Company, it included groceries, a meat market, and clothing. Later it became an upscale department store called Bon Marche. The Mert’s current owners have restored it to include shops and eateries. In the hallways on all three floors are historic photos, and a public restroom is on the first floor.

2. Long-Bell Reading Room
   - Located inside the Mert, this is a treasure trove of local historical memorabilia. Browse through copies of the Long-Bell Logs (the company newsletter), photos of sports teams, aerial photos of early Longview, school yearbooks, and mementos of many pageants and other historical events.

3. Henry Building, 1924
   - 1303 Commerce Avenue
   - A key retail location at the heart of downtown Longview, this building shows a great example of the dead restriction—designs were intended to maintain a uniform facade. Construction was completed in 1924. The building is home to several nice shops.

4. Oversby Building, 1946
   - 1427 Commerce Ave.
   - A delightful touch of Merry Old England now resides in this building. Picture murals inside transport you to another place and time.

5. J. C. Penney Building, 1948
   - 1445 Commerce Ave.
   - During post-WWII years major department stores discovered our downtown. This very utilitarian structure typified “form following function” in architectural style with large display windows rather than ornate facades to attract busy customers with baby-boomers in tow.

6. Pacific Telegraph & Telephone Building, 1928**
   - 1304 Vandercook Way
   - Opened in 1928 as the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company’s local headquarters, this was the only public utility’s local headquarters, this is the only structure in Longview ever covered in terra cotta tiles. The building is home to several nice shops.

7. Columbia Theater for the Performing Arts, 1925**
   - 1225 Vandercook Way
   - The original theater featured vaudeville road shows and silent films with an omatone pipe organ. The organ is long gone, but the historic interior remains as do the upper floor apartments. Saved from the wrecking ball by the City of Longview in the early 1980s, it still entertains thousands with musicals, stage shows, and concerts.

8. Columbia Theater Plaza, 1985
   - Commerce and Vandercook
   - Enjoy the statue of children playing and plan your next theatrical visit. This plaza was part of the 1985 rehabilitation of the theater.

Historic Downtown

Commercial Avenue was planned to be built with mercantile levels and two or more stories in height. Many buildings still retain their architectural and historical character, such as the title entries.

Downtown Longview Today

Whether you enjoy unique shopping experiences, eating outside at one of the many spas or restaurants, taking in a movie or live theater, visiting local exhibits of fine art, or brushing up on your history, you’ll find it all downtown Longview.

*Use the map on the left to chart your excursion. **Building is on the Longview Historic Register. ***Building is on the National Historic Register.

Having a great time in Longview?

Sit and rest a while. Enjoy the statue of children playing and plan your next theatrical visit. This plaza was part of the 1985 rehabilitation of the theater.
Pick up a copy at the Community Development Department at City Hall, or call 360.442.5092 and request a copy.

View our historical photo tour at www.mylongview.com/photogallery/ or www.CityofLongview.com

Other Available Publications:
- Walking Tour of the Civic Center
- Chamber of Commerce www.longviewchamber.com
- www.cityoflongview.com

For more information about Longview’s early history, go to www.mylongview.com

Rickles Building, 1926*

1518 Commerce Avenue

This beautiful building housed Rickles Grocery, one of several small groceries in the strip district downtown. The sweeping arches and fine decorative detailing above make this historic building really stand out. With upper floor apartments, it contains the mixed uses featured throughout the block.

Korten Building, 1945

1490 Commerce Avenue

On this location was Longview’s first Chamber of Commerce. The famous northeast architect, Pietro Belluschi, designed this International-style building that includes the skybridge across the alley, linking it to the Willard Building directly behind.

Willard Building, 1924

1200 Block of Broadway

The Willard Building is the only intact example of Georgian Revival influence downtown. The city’s first bank, Willard’s offered inexpensive goods and was often referred to as the “5, 10 Cent Store.” The lunch counter had a popular soda fountain. The name Willard still appears at the corner sidewalk entrance.

Colonial Building, 1925

1430 Commerce Avenue

This mixed-use building gets its name from the Colonial style with red brick accents. Up on the third floor was Longview’s original Masonic Lodge. Since the 1940s, it has been a popular dance studio.

Val-Gay Building, 1946

1418 Commerce Avenue

From banks to beauty shops, this building has seen many uses. Take a break from history for a moment and step in to see displays of local artists. Mediums include paintings, pottery, photos, sculptures and jewelry. As a co-op, the gallery is run by 60 local artists. Their work is featured throughout the block.

Bower’s Building, 1924

1300 Block, Commerce Avenue

Across the street was the Lumberman’s Bank. An early financial center for downtown, the city’s first bank, Bower’s offered small groceries in the strip district downtown. The city’s first hospital was located across the street at the one-time world’s largest lumber mill, capable of cutting a million board feet of lumber a day. Read more about our unique history as a planned city on the interpretive panels.

Lumberman’s Bank – Big Four

1329 Commerce Avenue

Across the street was the Lumberman’s Bank. An early financial center in Longview, it failed during the Great Depression. Its original Georgian style facade was removed by the Big Four Furniture Company in 1934 and replaced with an Art-Deco facade.

Lumberman’s Bank Pedestal Clock, 1926*

During its heyday, the Bank installed this freestanding clock for the benefit of the entire downtown neighborhood. After years of neglect, it was restored by the Longview Public Service Group, a charitable organization also responsible for the interpretive panels, the steam whistle and the R. A. Long statue nearby.

Title Building, 1926

1297 Commerce Avenue

Be sure to visit the art gallery in the upstairs of this building, featuring the works of local artists.

Schumann Building, 1926*

1233-1237 Commerce Avenue

Influenced by the International style of the 20s and 40s, it became a standard feature of downtowns across America. Schumann’s offered its first colorful cream-colored terra cotta trim along the corner, the decorative column with “1926” scripted in it.

Stratford Building, 1926*

1201-1207 Commerce Avenue

Noted for its retail buys on both Commerce and Hemlock streets, this building now houses 20 apartments on its second and third floors.

Pounder Building, 1925**

1208-1217 Commerce Avenue

This Tudor Revival style building is located across the street at the 5th corner. The exterior is of half-colored brick with terra cotta trim. It was designed by local architect H.L. Copeland.