The commercial buildings located on this block of Auburn's Main Street exemplify three distinctive decades of physical and economic development within the community.

124-130 West Main Street

Tourist Hotel

Constr. 1905

Once touted as the only first-class hotel between Seattle and Tacoma, this distinctive two-story brick building stands as a remnant of the early railroad era and popular late 19th and early 20th Century architecture. Located in close proximity to the Northern Pacific depot, it exemplifies the era when railroads transported adventurers from elsewhere in the U.S. and from Europe and Asia, to Auburn and encouraged agricultural production for sales to distant markets.

119-122 West Main Street

Constr. 1923

This unusual commercial structure is indicative of the substantial commercial activity which occurred during the post World War I era, when improved rail and motor transportation contributed to general prosperity. The architectural distinctiveness of this building has been diminished by window and parapet alterations.

106-108 West Main Street

Truitt Building

Constr. 1913

This relatively unaltered retail/office building was constructed as Auburn experienced its first population boom, due to the establishment of the Northern Pacific freight terminal. It is architecturally distinguished by a stepped parapet and ornate cornices. Minor alterations have occurred at the mezzanine and storefront levels.

102 West Main Street

Rainey Block

Constr. ca. 1912

Built on the site of the old wood-frame Odd P'loyer's Hall, the Rainey Block is contemporary with the adjacent commercial structure. The construction of this substantial masonry buildings is indicative of the Northern Pacific freight terminal's impact on the physical and economic development of the city. The Rainey Block has lost some distinctive architectural features: a stepped brick parapet with "Rainey Block" in cast stone, some cast stone window trim, and original storefront construction.

Old Auburn City Hall

Constr. in 1925 and designed by Andrew Willatsen, the building once stood at the northeast corner of the intersection of First Street NW and "A" Street NW. The current City Hall was built in 1978.

26 East Main Street

Cavanaugh's Hardware

Constr. ca. 1907

This is the oldest business in Auburn to continuously operate under the same family ownership. Established in 1887, Cavanaugh's has been in business at this address for 80 years. When Sam Cavanaugh moved his hardware store to Auburn from Kent in 1894, he paid $77 rent per month. After establishing his store in this location in 1908, it became one of Auburn's leading businesses, operated with the help of his sons, Charles and Ray. Charles' son, Ed, and grandson, Patrick, have continued the family tradition. While the exterior has been extensively modernized, visitors can ask inside to see a noteworthy collection of historic photographs and artifacts.

124-144 East Main Street

Johnson Block

Constr. 1921

This prominent two-story masonry structure originally housed a general merchandise/department store and miscellaneous smaller retail businesses at the storefront level and hotel apartments upstairs. The distinctive raised and stepped parapet and cornice features dominate this portion of Main Street and typify the popular architectural features of commercial buildings constructed during this era.

268 East Main Street

Old Ames Apartment House

Constr. 1925

For many years, pharmacy businesses were located at the storefront level of this apartment hotel building. The storefront level has been somewhat altered by the installation of a signage band which covers the mezzanine level window and the removal of an entrance canopy.

102 East Main Street

Masonic Temple

Constr. 1923

This two-story masonry structure is clad with glazed terra-cotta and designed to include moderate, although distinctive, architectural details derived from the Beaux Arts tradition. Of particular note are the classically detailed cornices and parapet, arched window openings grouped in sets of two or three and the prominent entrance bay. Several fraternal organizations were established in Auburn by the early 1890s, typical of numerous other newly established communities during this era. The King Solomon Lodge No. 60 was chartered in 1890. The site for this substantial lodge hall was donated by Aaron S. and Sarah Neely in 1922. It continues today to serve as the Masonic Temple.

104 East Main Street

Massey's

Constr. ca. 1947

Originally known as the Dahlgren & Massey Food Market, it was constructed by Ray S. Dahlgren, who had been in the grocery business in Auburn since ca. 1927 and in business with Byron W. Massey since ca. 1936. Built as a modern supermarket, it exhibits particularly distinctive Streamline Modern architectural features, which dominate the streetscape.

107 East Main Street

Old Mission Theatre (Avalon Theatre)

Constr. ca. 1924

This distinctive Spanish Eclectic style building appears to have originally served as a movie theatre, as well as a meeting hall for fraternal organizations. It is one of several buildings along Main Street which were used by social and fraternal groups. Its unusual architectural features originally included mission tile roofing and ornate windows and trim.

20 Auburn Avenue

Old U.S. Post Office

Constr. 1937

A prominent building along Auburn Way, this former U.S. Post Office was designed in a restrained but biface Colonial Revival style. It appears to have been a WPA (Works Progress Administration) project and now serves as a facility for the King County Department of Public Health.

13 Auburn Avenue

Old Williams Auto Livery

Constr. 1926 (remodeled ca. 1943)

This structure was originally constructed as a bus depot and operated as such until ca. 1943, when it was converted into the Auburn Avenue Theatre. It now houses a community theatre performance space. The old Motor Lunch Cafe space continues to be used as a restaurant.

110 West Main Street

Jones Block

Constr. 1911

Constr. for Talvoin Jones, a Welsh immigrant to Auburn, the storefront level operated initially as a general merchandise and department store and post office, later as a grocery and as a furniture and hardware store. The upper floor operated as the Lloyd Hotel and the Park Hotel for many years. A cast stone structure constructed during an important period in the development of the community, it has been architecturally altered and no longer includes several distinctive features: the stepped parapet with "Jones Block" in cast stone, sheet metal cornice and retail canopy.
From Wilderness to Urban Community*

One hundred years ago, the White River Valley was covered with rich vegetation, swamps, and dense forests. It was a place where peoples' lives were continually challenged by unpredictable floods, and where native Americans fished and hunted. At the confluence of the Green and White Rivers, the story of the White River Valley, the people who settled there, and the development of a little town called Slaughter, which today is known as Auburn, Washington, is reflected in the historic buildings and sites included in this walking/driving tour.

From the time the first frontier residents created a settlement out of a wilderness, their hopes and dreams, combined with self-reliance and hard work, created a lasting legacy of a strong and united community. The metamorphosis of a small frontier outpost into a well developed industrial center is an interesting story. While Auburn's physical appearance and character have greatly changed over the past one hundred years, many important historic and cultural resources associated with its development remain as part of our present, as the town embraces the challenges of the next century and beyond.

* Paraphrased from the book, Auburn: A Look Down Main Street, C1990, City of Auburn.