

# Welcome to Longview . . . where history lives!

Longview is a planned city that was conceptualized between 1918 and 1922 when the Long-Bell Lumber Company purchased 14,000 acres of the Columbia River Valley bottom to build a mill site and accompanying town. Seventy thousand acres of timber were purchased from the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company in Lewis and Cowlitz Counties, and Longview was born.

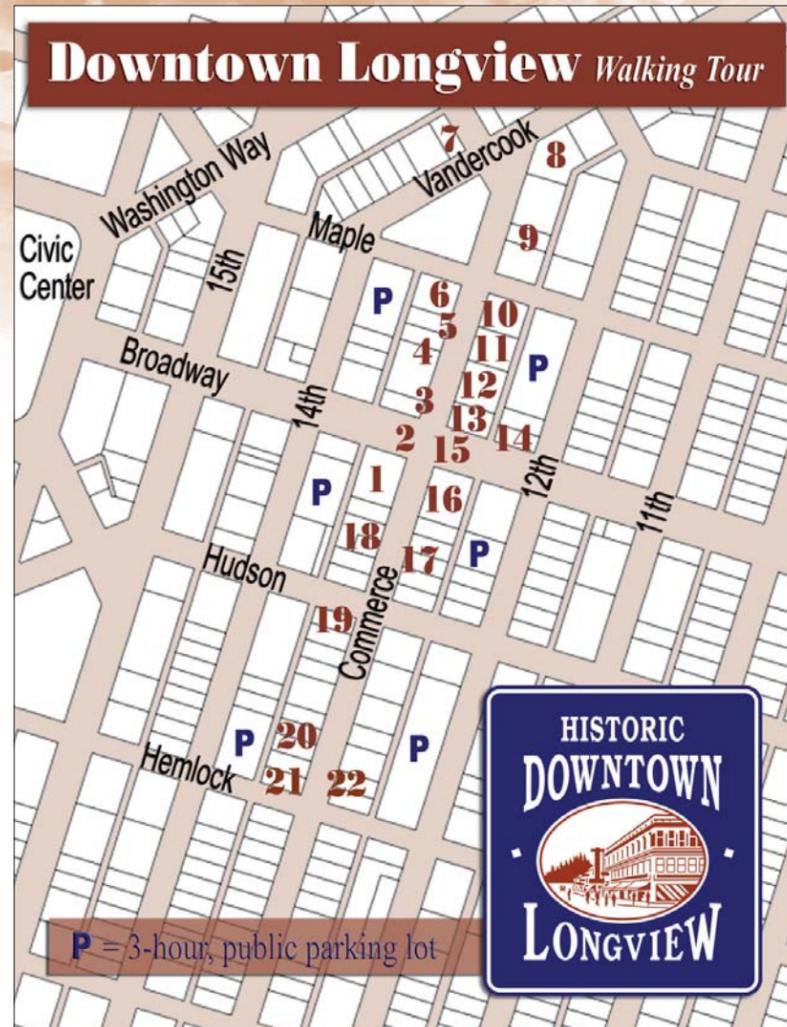
Founding father Robert A. Long, Long-Bell Chairman, envisioned a large-scale city plan that could accommodate 50,000 inhabitants. Construction of Longview began in 1922, and by 1927, much of the construction had been completed.

## Historic Downtown

Commerce Avenue was planned to be and is today the heart of the Central Business District. Deed restrictions required buildings to be built with mezzanine levels and between two and eight stories in height. Many buildings still retain their architectural and historical character, such as the tile entries.

## Downtown Longview Today

Whether you enjoy unique shopping experiences, eating outside at one of the many quaint restaurants, taking in a performance at the Columbia Theatre, visiting local exhibits of fine art, or brushing up on your history, you'll find it in downtown Longview.



# Tour of Historic Downtown

Use the map on the left to chart your excursion (\* building is on the Longview Historic Register, \*\* building is on the National Historic Register).

**1** Columbia River Mercantile Building, 1923\*  
**1339 Commerce Avenue**  
 Popularly known as “The Merk,” 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 Merk’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.



with the Daily News in hand, and is being given a thank-you flower by a young girl. Read the historical panel, and view the Merk’s historic window display.

Long-Bell Reading Room  
 Located inside the Merk, 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.

Washington G & E Building, 1928\*\*  
**1329 Broadway**  
 Look past Mr. Long at the General Mortgage Building. Originally the gas and electric utility’s local headquarters, this is the only structure in Longview entirely covered in terra cotta tiles. The building is home to several nice shops.



**2** “Thank-you, Mr. Long,” 2006  
**Commerce and Broadway**

Located at the heart of downtown Longview, history practically comes to life with these bronze statues. Longview founder R. A. Long is in his traditional straw hat



**3** Henry Building, 1924  
**1401 Commerce Avenue**  
 A key retail location at the heart of downtown Longview, this building shows a great example of the deed restrictions designed into retail construction: terra cotta façade, main floor retail space with mezzanines, and second story residential/offices. The original Broadway - White Cross Pharmacy was at the corner for many years.

**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** Longview Theater, 1941  
**1433 Commerce Ave.**  
 Head north along Commerce and you’ll walk under the marquee of this historic movie house. It once seated 700 patrons. Its façade is an excellent example of Art Deco, popular in the 1930s.



**6** 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.

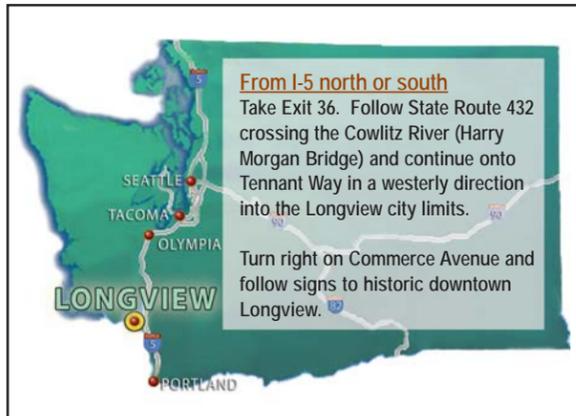
**7** Pacific Telegraph & Telephone Building, 1928\*\*  
**1304 Vandercook Way**  
 Look at the wonderful Art Deco details across Vandercook Way on today’s Berg Building. Formerly known as the Telephone Office, its brick and terra cotta exterior is nearly unchanged. Now a private residence, its owners are leading the way toward new downtown living.

**8** Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts, 1925\*\*  
**1231 Vandercook Way**  
 The original theater featured vaudeville road shows and silent films with an ornate 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.



Columbia Theater Plaza, 1985  
**Commerce & Vandercook Way**  
 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.





## Resource Information

City of Longview

360.442.5022 | [www.mylongview.com](http://www.mylongview.com)

Chamber of Commerce

360.423.8400 | [www.kelsolongviewchamber.org/](http://www.kelsolongviewchamber.org/)

Community Calendar

[www.cowlitztoday.com](http://www.cowlitztoday.com)

Other Available Publications:  
**Walking Tour of the Civic Center**

*Pick up a copy at the Community Development Department at City Hall, or call 360.442.5092 and request a copy.*



*This publication is produced through the Longview Historic Preservation Commission, PO Box 128, Longview, WA 98632, 360.442.5081.*

View our historical photo tour at [www.mylongview.com/photogallery/](http://www.mylongview.com/photogallery/)

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**9** Rickles Building, 1926\*  
**1518 Commerce Avenue**  
This beautiful building housed Rickles Grocery, one of several small groceries in the original downtown. The sweeping arches and fine decorative detailing above make this historic building really stand out. With upper floor apartments, it continues the mixed uses featured throughout the block.

**10** F. W. Woolworth Building, 1949  
**1460 Commerce Avenue**  
Influenced by the International style of the 20s and 40s, it became a standard feature of downtowns across America. Woolworth'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 Woolworth still appears at the corner sidewalk entrance.

**11** 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.



**12** 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 stop 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.

**13** Korten Building, 1945  
**1400 Commerce Avenue**  
On this location was Longview's first Chamber of Commerce. The famous northwest architect, Pietro Belluschi, designed this International-style building that includes the skybridge across the alley, linking it to the Willard Building directly behind.

**14** Willard Building, 1924  
**1200 Block of Broadway**  
The Willard Building is the only intact example of Georgian Revival influence downtown. The city's first hospital was located on the second floor in the mid-20s. Shops on Broadway continue to thrive.



**15** Chief Lelooska's Totem Pole, 1965  
**Commerce & Broadway**  
A Native American wood-carver, Chief Lelooska from Ariel, Washington carved many totem poles including the world's tallest, now in Kalama. He carved this one for local Campfire Girls. Recently restored for a Boy Scout's Eagle project, its story is translated on the interpretive panel.



**16** Bower's Building, 1924  
**1338 Commerce Avenue**  
Home of Longview's former Montgomery Wards store, a local savings and loan association rehabilitated this key building into a financial center and retail/office complex in the 1980s.

**17** "Big Ben," Long-Bell Steam Whistle, 1923\*  
**1300 Block, Commerce Avenue**  
Originally at Long-Bell's Longview mill complex, this whistle signaled shift changes 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.



**18** Lumberman's Bank - Big Four Building, 1923\*\*  
**1329 Commerce Avenue**  
Across the street was the Lumberman's Bank. An early financial center for 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 neighbor-



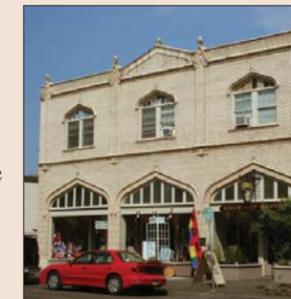
hood. After years of neglect, it was restored by the Longview Public Service Group, a charitable organization also responsible for the interpretive panels, the steam whistle and the R. A. Long statue nearby.

**19** Title Building, 1926  
**1267 Commerce Avenue**  
Be sure to visit the art gallery in the upstairs of this building, featuring the works of local artists.

**20** Schumann Building, 1926\*  
**1233-1237 Commerce Avenue**  
This building is noted for its beautiful cream-colored terra cotta trim along the cornice and a decorative column with "1926" scripted in it.

**21** Stratford Building, 1926\*  
**1201-1207 Commerce Avenue**  
Noted for its retail bays on both Commerce and Hemlock streets, this building now houses 20 apartments on its second and third floors.

**22** Pounder Building, 1925\*\*  
**1208-1217 Commerce Avenue**  
This Tudor Revival style building is located across the street at the next corner. The exterior is of buff-colored brick with terracotta trim. It was designed by local architect H.L. Copeland.



*For more information about Longview's early history, go to [www.mylongview.com](http://www.mylongview.com).*

# DISCOVER *the heart of* LONGVIEW



**Walking Tour of  
Downtown Longview**  
*Where history lives.*