

The Quiet Side of Seattle Center - ParentMap

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The Quiet Side of Seattle Center

6 pockets of green space, history and art to discover with your kids



Dingwall Courtyard | Photo credit: Will Austin

Once a site of Native American celebrations, [Seattle Center](#) has a long history as a community gathering space, from organized events such as the 1962 World's Fair to spontaneous gatherings such as the vigils following Kurt Cobain's death and 9/11. Its community-connecting role continues, not just through festivals and arts events, but through quiet pockets of public space that honor our common thread of humanity. Can you and your kids discover them all this summer? (Psst: The map at seattlecenter.com/tours will help.)

Anne Frank's Tree

The highly visible southeast gateway to Seattle Center, anchored by the Space Needle, is not a likely spot for hidden treasures. Yet if you look, you'll find one. Nestled between the Space Needle's valet

parking circle and the IMAX theater is the Peace Garden. Look for a [small horse chestnut tree](#), which was planted at the southwest entrance to the garden in this year. A gift from the Anne Frank House to the [Holocaust Center for Humanity](#), the tree is a seedling from the very same chestnut tree outside of Anne Frank's hiding place that she wrote so poignantly about in her diary. Now protected inside a metal cage and marked with a small plaque nearby, Seattle's sapling is one of only 11 of the tree's descendants to be planted in the U.S.

Poetry Garden

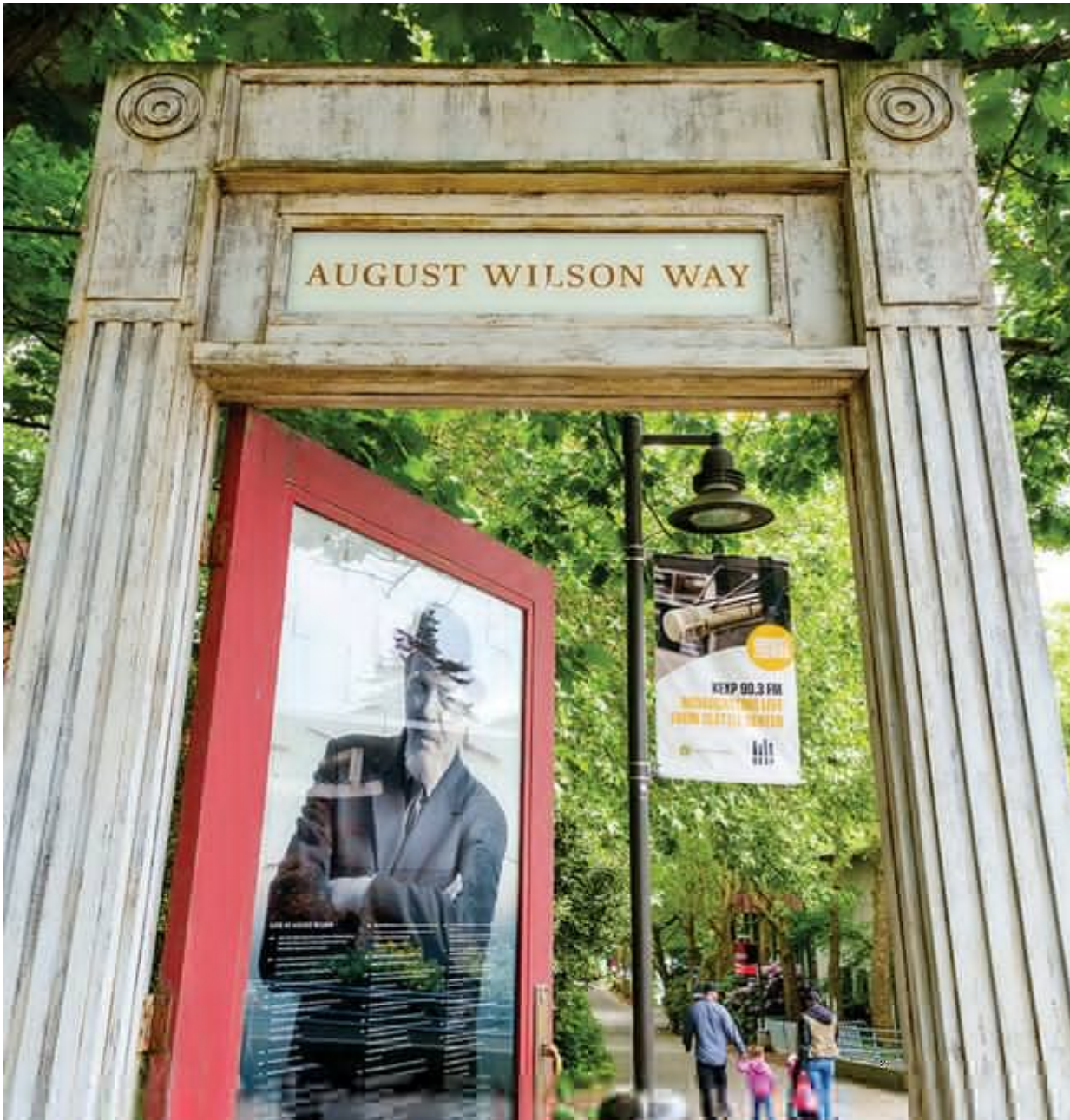
Hidden in plain sight, this [quiet pocket of vegetation](#) outside the Armory's west exit, next to Fisher Pavilion, feels surprisingly isolated. Polished granite boulders inscribed with poems by artists as different as Shel Silverstein and Basho litter the paths. What do they all have in common? They are short and easy for little kids to read. The garden also hosts [a series of art installations](#). This summer, look for [Naoko Morisawa's Morse Code Project](#) and try to guess her secret message in the pattern made of colorful garden hose tubing. Note: The Poetry Garden is fenced off during major events to keep the



Even Dingwall Courtyard

Anne Frank's tree | Photo credit: Will Austin

As you exit Seattle Center along Theater Commons (the promenade between Seattle Repertory Theater and the Cornish Playhouse), just before you reach Mercer Street, an opening in the wall on your right leads to **Dingwall Courtyard**, a tranquil patio centered around a splashing fountain. Rest (or picnic) at the tables and chairs, while kids make wishes at the fountain.



August Wilson Way Portal | Photo credit: Will Austin

August Wilson Portal

The main gates to the World's Fair were on the south side of Seattle Center, facing downtown. But in recent years, the center has become more welcoming to the neighborhood to the north.

Now, instead of a dead end, Republican Street ends at the [August Wilson Way Portal](#), a 12-foot-tall, steel and glass monument to the Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright.

Younger kids will be happily awed by the appearance of a giant open door — unattached to any building — opening onto the grounds. Older kids will appreciate the inscriptions from Wilson's plays and the portrait of an artist who opened so many doors in his own lifetime.

Win prizes!

Follow [these 3 simple steps](#) to win big this July in our Seattle Center-inspired **Instagram photo contest!**



The UpGarden | Photo credit: Will Austin

UpGarden

The roof of Seattle Center's four-story Mercer parking garage is the unlikely home to a charming oasis called the [UpGarden](#), the largest rooftop community garden in America. Like all of Seattle's P-Patches, the UpGarden is open to the public, although the food and flowers belong to the individual gardeners who grow them. Look for quirky touches such as flowers sprouting from a vintage car and an old Airstream serving as a tool shed, and don't hesitate to take a few selfies — [Instagram alert!](#) — with the Space Needle in the background.



Dupen Fountain | Photo credit: Will Austin

Dupen Fountain

The International Fountain, with its super jets, is rightly the centerpiece of Seattle Center. But its steep slopes and screaming crowds can be too much for smaller children. Head west between the new A/NT Gallery and SIFF Film Center to find the courtyard that hides **Dupen Fountain**. Formally titled Fountain of Creation, the large, unofficial wading pool hosts happily splashing children among its bronze statues and small fountain jets, while parents relax nearby on the bench wall in the shady breezeway. (Note: Engineers test the water quality of this pool, and all other water features at the center, daily.)

Read more about Seattle Center

- [Secrets to Seattle Center](#) (introduction and index)
- [Best Things to Do at Seattle Center by Age: Ultimate Guide](#)
- [Sky High? How to Do the Space Needle Right](#)
- [Seattle Center Stories](#)
- [James Whetzel, Seattle Center's Music Man](#)
- [Festál: Seattle Center's Window on the World](#)
- [A Summer Day in the Life of Seattle Center](#)