



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli
FROM: Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Designating Wahlgren’s Florist Shop, 201 North Yakima Avenue, as a City Landmark and adding it to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – April 13, 2021
DATE: March 23, 2021

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution designating Wahlgren’s Florist Shop, located at 201 North Yakima Avenue, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places.

BACKGROUND:

On May 27, 2020, Historic Tacoma, an independent non-profit historic preservation advocacy group, submitted a nomination for 201 and 205 North Yakima Avenue (Wahlgren’s Florist Shop and Wahlgren residence, respectively) to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. On September 9, 2020, the Landmark’s Preservation Commission (Commission) held a public hearing to receive comment on the proposed nomination. Following the hearing, on October 14, 2020, the Commission unanimously voted to recommend to City Council that the building at 201 North Yakima Avenue be added to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for its association with the historic floral industry in Tacoma and as a familiar and established feature of the Stadium District Neighborhood.

The Commission did not recommend historic designation of the residence at 205 North Yakima Avenue. The Commission did not review or consider the proposed future development of the site; the recommendation is made solely on the criteria for historic designation contained in the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC). This action is opposed by the property owner, who wishes to redevelop the site.

The Landmarks Commission’s Recommendation is Based On:

The Commission found that the building at 201 North Yakima Avenue meets Criterion A in TMC 13.07, for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns or our history. Specifically, the Commission believes the florist shop is a rare surviving connection with the cut flower industry in Tacoma and the south Puget Sound. Tacoma was the center of one of the largest flower industries in the United States, but now the local industry is gone. The Commission further feels that the association with the historical narrative of Tacoma’s flower industry is intact despite the loss of the vitrolite panels on the parapet, and the business identity sign.

The Commission also found that the property at 201 North Yakima Avenue meets the eligibility criteria for Criterion F. As a prominent feature of the intersection since 1949, and having been included in neighborhood murals, the Commission found that the building does have singular physical characteristics and is clearly an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood.

Previously, both 201 and 205 North Yakima Avenue were under review by the Commission per the City’s recently adopted demolition review ordinance (TMC 13.12.570), which requires the Commission to review any proposed demolitions within National Register Historic Districts. The buildings on the subject property and the adjacent property are proposed for demolition to make way for a new multifamily development, as allowed in the NCX



zone. The owner of the properties commissioned a Historic Property Assessment Report as required by the demolition review ordinance. The historic assessment report concluded that neither affected building appeared to be individually eligible for the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. Staff concurred with this conclusion and did not recommend further review.

However, following their review of the Assessment Report, the Commission voted to recommend to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee that the property be formally considered for historic designation, as per the demolition review process, on April 22, 2020.

On January 13, 2021, the IPS Committee reviewed the nomination and Commission recommendation and voted to forward the nomination to the full City Council. They also directed that it be presented to the City Council as a briefing item prior to the City Council vote. This item was also presented at study session on April 6, 2021.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

This nomination has been under review by the Commission since May 2020 and has been discussed in virtual public meetings on numerous occasions. A public hearing occurred on September 9, 2020, and outreach included notices to both tenants and property taxpayers within a 400 foot radius of the subject properties. In addition, this item has been published in multiple social media platforms and covered in The News Tribune. The Commission received community input through the public notice and public hearing process and those comments were considered and addressed, where appropriate, by the Commission in their findings and recommendations.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

This legislation is not anticipated to have a direct effect on equity or accessibility, either positive or negative. If this site is designated to the historic register, it will likely reduce the scale of or prevent the proposed market rate multifamily housing development planned for this location. Conversely, the existing building in its present use potentially offers a low cost commercial rental.

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity
Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity
Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* High Opportunity
Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

Designation and protection of historic buildings within the city ensures these buildings remain for future generations to experience. In addition, such properties contribute to a sense of unique place and encourage investment into the neighborhood. Nominations also come from the public. Land use is not governed by historic designations. Preservation encourages adaptive reuse, decreasing the impact from demolition and construction related waste.



ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Not designate structure to the historic register.	No restrictions on future development of the site. Additional housing units will be added to the market rate housing supply in Tacoma.	The neighborhood will experience a loss of a familiar location. In addition, the proposed new structure will dramatically affect the look feel of the built environment in this area, which is also a National Register Historic District. The existing property would not be eligible for preservation incentives.
2. Remand the nomination back to Landmarks Commission for further consideration; for example, to address specific concerns identified by the City Council.	The City Council could identify specific issues to resolve prior to further consideration.	This would delay the decision making process, potentially further affecting the owner.
3. The City Council could modify the resolution, including reducing the boundaries or elements under protection of the Landmarks Commission, or providing direction regarding future development on the site.	This course of action has not been evaluated, but potentially could lead to a compromise between the desire for development on the site and preservation goals.	This course of action has not been evaluated, so a compromise that both preserves the building and permits the proposed development may not be viable.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

Additions to the historic register encourage financial investment in listed properties. These investment numbers are reported annually to the state and City Council.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recommends designating Wahlgren’s Florist Shop, located at 201 North Yakima Avenue, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places.



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Location Map
- Findings and Recommendations of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
- Historic Nomination Form
- Historic Property Assessment Report (submitted by owner per demolition permit requirements)