



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
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 the Virges Apartments, 720 6th Avenue, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – December 6, 2022
DATE: November 16, 2022

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution designating the Virges Apartments, located at 720 6th Avenue, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places.

BACKGROUND:

This Department’s Recommendation is based on the findings and recommendations of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The Virges Apartments, now known as the Wright Park Condos, is an Eclectic Revival style apartment building constructed in 1925. The building is representative of the period of change and growth in Tacoma where masonry apartments began to replace earlier wood frame single-family dwellings. The apartment boom was driven by increasing demand for urban density, by private investors, and by shifts in demographics. The building sits directly adjacent to the Hob Nob Restaurant (712-716 6th Ave) which is already listed on the Tacoma Register; both buildings were constructed the same year by the same developer, William Virges. The nominated building retains many of its original features on both the exterior and interior. The nomination includes the principal structure and was drafted and submitted by the owners’ association.

The nomination was received by the Historic Preservation Office in July 2022. On September 14, 2022, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) scheduled the nomination for a public hearing on October 12, 2022. Following the hearing, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Virges Apartments to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting Criteria A, C, E, and F under Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.07.040.

The nomination and designation process of properties to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places is described in TMC 13.07. Properties placed on the historic register are subject to design review for future alterations, thus protecting the historic character of the city.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

This item was reviewed in two separate public meetings, including a public hearing to gather community input. The property owner’s ability to alter the property will be affected.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

This legislation is not anticipated to have a direct effect on equity or accessibility, either positive or negative. However, historic designation of historically significant multifamily buildings will help to preserve higher density historic structures while providing tools and incentives for upkeep and continued investment.



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

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate 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.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
Not adding the building to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places	No additional restrictions to development or maintenance	Future changes to the structure that negatively alter architectural character, including demolition, could take place without the review of the LPC. The property would not be eligible for financial and development incentives that encourage adaptive reuse.

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:

Staff concurs with the recommendation of the LPC to designate the above property as a City Landmark, which will help to preserve this important structure for future generations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENT:

- Map and Current Photograph