



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 Washington Building as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – June 27, 2017
DATE: June 12, 2017

SUMMARY:

This memorandum provides background information on a request for a Council Resolution to place the following property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places:

- Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building (1019 Pacific Avenue)

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

State and briefly explain which strategic policy priority is best aligned to this action. Please remove the statements below you are not directly addressing.

- Foster a vibrant and diverse economy with good jobs for all Tacoma residents.
- Assure outstanding stewardship of the natural and built environment.

BACKGROUND:

The Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building was nominated to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places by UNICO, the property owner. The Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building was built in 1925. The Beaux Arts Style building, once the tallest in Tacoma, is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building is of primary historical significance to Tacoma. The building was designed by prominent architects Frederick Webber and Doyle & Merriam and built by Rounds-Clist. The building was originally designed as the Scandinavian Bank Building; however, the bank failed before construction could be completed. Architects Doyle & Merriam were hired to complete the building, renamed the Washington Building, in 1924. Its steel frame skeleton was the inspiration for the Tacoma-based Flitcraft Parable, which appears in Dashiell Hammett’s *Maltese Falcon*. The building is significant for its association with the development of Tacoma’s downtown commercial district; as a Beaux Arts-style commercial building designed by Webber, Doyle & Merriam; and as an established visual feature in downtown Tacoma.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission considered the nomination on February 22, 2017, and conducted a public hearing to receive comment on March 22, 2017. Following the hearing, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building.

ISSUE:

By designating the Washington Building/Scandinavian American Bank Building as a City Landmark, the building will be protected for future generations. In addition, it may become eligible for City historic preservation incentives, including Special Tax Valuation, low-interest loans and Transfer of Development Rights.



ALTERNATIVES:

If the building is not added to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, future changes to the structure that negatively alter architectural character, including demolition, could take place without the review of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, provided that all land use and building code requirements were met. In addition, the property would not be eligible for financial and development incentives that encourage adaptive reuse.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff concurs with the recommendation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission 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.