



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 Four properties as City Landmarks and placing said properties on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – February 11, 2025
DATE: January 27, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution designating the following properties as City Landmarks and placing these properties on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places:

1. Wapato Park (6500 South Sheridan Avenue)
2. McCormick Building at the Wheelock Branch Library (3722 North 26th Street)
3. Mottet Branch Library (3523 East G Street)
4. Shurz House (411 South M Street)

BACKGROUND:

This recommendation is based on the findings and recommendations of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

Wapato Park, located at 6500 South Sheridan Avenue, was established in 1889 as a private attraction. Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) acquired the first 20 acres in the 1920s. Over the following decades, additional parcels were transferred to the park district. The public park at Wapato Lake expanded until the full lake shoreline was under MPT stewardship. The park today bears much of the character as developed in 1936-37 by the Works Progress Administration, which created the landscape and major improvements such as the walking trails, rustic style picnic shelters, bathhouse/concessions (pavilion) building, pergola, waterfall pond, alpine garden, stone bridge, and various other site features.

This nomination was submitted by MPT, the property owner. On July 10, 2024, the LPC found that the property appeared to meet the threshold criteria and scheduled the nomination for a public hearing. Following the hearing on September 11, 2024, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of Wapato Park to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting Criteria C and G under Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.07.040. The proposed historic designation would include the exteriors of the historic accessory buildings/outbuildings, site, and historic landscaping, including the bathhouse/concessions (pavilion), rustic style picnic shelters (1930s), and landscape features such as the stone bridge, stone entrance plinths, pergola, rustic stone drinking fountain, alpine garden and waterfall pond, and historic walkways and paths.

Built in 1927, the Anna McCormick Building is the original portion of the present-day Wheelock Branch Library, located at 3722 North 26th Street. Designed by Tacoma architect Silas Nelsen, the McCormick Building is a fine example of the Tudor Revival style. It is the oldest extant (and second ever built) branch library of the Tacoma Public Library system and associated with the development of the same. Subsequent additions were done in 1959 and 1988. The nomination includes the original building and historic additions (1959), exclusive of the interior. The 1988 Wheelock addition, to the east, is set back from the McCormick portion and is not included in the proposed nomination.



Built in 1930, the Mottet Branch Library at 3523 East G Street was designed by noted Tacoma architect Silas Nelsen in the French Eclectic style. It the second oldest extant (and third ever built) branch library of the Tacoma Public Library system and association with the development of the same. A 1963-64 addition and an expansion of the north wing in 1976 have increased the building's capacity to meet growing demands of the McKinley Hill neighborhood. The nomination includes the original building and historic additions, exclusive of the interior.

Both libraries were researched and nominated by Historic Tacoma with the endorsement of the Tacoma Public Library Board of Trustees. On September 11, 2024, the LPC found that both branch library buildings appeared to meet the threshold criteria and scheduled the nominations for a public hearing on October 9, 2024. Following the hearing, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of the McCormick Building at the Wheelock Branch Library and the Mottet Branch Library to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting the following under TMC 13.07.040: Criteria A, C and G for both properties; the McCormick Building was also recommended under Criteria E.

Built in 1891, the single-family residence at 411 South M Street was built by George S. Shurz. It is a fine example of the Queen Anne style and is within the Wedge Conservation District and the Wedge National Register Historic District. The nomination includes the original building, historic additions, and accessory buildings/outbuildings (specifically, the 1892 carriage house). The site, landscaping, and building interior are not included in the proposed designation.

This nomination was submitted by the property owner. On November 13, 2024, the LPC found that the property appeared to meet the threshold criteria for designation. Following the public hearing on December 11, 2024, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Shurz House to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting Criteria C and E under 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. In addition, historic tax incentives may be available for historically appropriate renovations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

These items were each reviewed in two separate public meetings, including a public hearing to gather community input. The library nominations were reviewed by the Tacoma Public Library Board of Trustees. For all nominations, future alterations to the properties will require approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

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 buildings will help to preserve and facilitate adaptive reuse of these structures by 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 and sites within the City ensures they remain for future generations to experience. In addition, such properties contribute to a sense of unique place and encourage investment into the neighborhood. There are numerous examples of historic renovations that have contributed positively to quality of life and urban vibrancy in downtown Tacoma. The Wheelock and Mottet Branches of the Tacoma Public Library were both identified as preservation priorities in the McKinley Neighborhood Plan. Land use is not governed by historic designations.

ALTERNATIVES:

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

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 recommendations of the LPC to designate the above properties as City Landmarks, which will help to preserve these important resources for future generations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS:

Property Location Maps