



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services *PH*
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Designating the Willamette Casket Building, 2916-2926 South Steele Street, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – August 1, 2023
DATE: July 10, 2023

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution designating the Willamette Casket Building, located at 2916-2926 South Steele Street, 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 Willamette Casket Building, located at 2916-2926 South Steele Street, is a masonry building constructed in three distinct phases over the course of its history. The principal portion, a mid-rise four-story building constructed in 1907, is an unreinforced brick masonry industrial building that includes a two-story boiler room (aka, Steam Plant) wing. Local architect Frederick Heath designed the 1907 portions. Later phases added to the footprint, creating the current irregular shaped plan. Proximity to railroad tracks also shaped the complex over time. Some of the character-defining features include the three projections from the principal building: the boiler stack, the enclosed exterior staircase, and the exterior freight elevator. The nominated building retains many of its original features on both the exterior and interior; however, the original windows have been removed and the openings are boarded over. The nomination includes the principal structure, historic additions, and accessory buildings/outbuildings. The nomination was submitted by the owner.

The nomination was received by the Historic Preservation Office in December 2022. On February 22, 2023, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) scheduled the nomination for a public hearing on April 12, 2023. Following the hearing, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Willamette Casket Building to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting Criteria A, B, C, and G 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. In addition, historic tax incentives will be available for historically appropriate renovations.

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 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:* Low Opportunity
Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Very Low 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. There are numerous examples of historic renovations that have contributed positively to quality of life and urban vibrancy in downtown Tacoma. 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.



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Map of property location