



TO: T.C. Broadnax, 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 Theodore Hosmer Residence as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – July 19, 2016
DATE: June 30, 2016

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:

- Thomas Theodore Hosmer Residence (309 S 9th Street)

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

This action will support the following priorities:

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

BACKGROUND:

The Thomas Theodore Hosmer Residence (Hosmer Residence) was nominated to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places by Historic Tacoma, an independent private nonprofit organization of Tacoma residents that advocates for historic resources. The Hosmer Residence was originally constructed in 1875 as a “double house,” one half of which was designated as the residence of Theodore Hosmer and his family. Originally the house faced Saint Helens Street, but was relocated in 1904/1905 to its current location facing South 9th Street.

The Hosmer Residence is of primary historical significance to Tacoma. It is the oldest standing residence known in Tacoma outside of Fort Nisqually, and is one of the City’s oldest existing structures. Mr. Hosmer served as the Special Agent in Charge of the New Tacoma town site for the Northern Pacific Railroad, was the President of the Board of Trustees of Tacoma when it applied for a city charter, and was chosen in 1882 to be the first Mayor of New Tacoma. Mr. Hosmer was also a founding member of the Union Club, the Tacoma Yacht Club, the Washington State Historical Society, as well as an incorporator of Puget Sound University, Director of the Pacific National Bank, and President of Tacoma Light & Water. The building itself is a rare example of the Italianate style from the 1870s and early 1880s that once was common in Tacoma’s city core, before being demolished as the commercial center expanded.

The building is owned by Pioneer Human Services, which has not taken a position on the nomination. The nomination has received letters of support from Historic Tacoma, Councilmember Thoms, the Central Neighborhood Council, the New Tacoma Neighborhood Council, the Tacoma Historical Society and the Heritage League of Pierce County, among others.



The Landmarks Preservation Commission considered the nomination on April 13, 2016 and conducted a public hearing to receive comment on May 25, 2016. Following the hearing, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Hosmer Residence.

ISSUE:

By designating the Hosmer Residence 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 discretionary review of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, provided that all land use and building code requirements were met. In addition, the owner would not be able to use the Historic Conditional Use Permit, and the planned historic adaptive reuse would not occur.

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.