



RESOLUTION NO. 40808

1 SPONSORED BY COUNCIL MEMBER THOMS

2 A RESOLUTION relating to historic preservation; rescinding the designation of
3 the Tacoma Totem Pole, located at Firefighters' Park, from the Tacoma
4 Register of Historic Places.

5 WHEREAS this recommendation is based on the Landmarks Preservation
6 Commission ("Landmarks Commission") findings and recommendations of May 26,
7 2021, regarding the proposed removal of the Tacoma Totem Pole ("Totem Pole"),
8 located at Firefighters' Park, from the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, and the
9 Tacoma Arts Commission's action to deaccession the totem pole from the
10 Municipal Art Collection ("Art Collection"), and related recommendations, and
11

12 WHEREAS the Landmarks Commission found that the Totem Pole is
13 inauthentic and an example of cultural appropriation, and its continued status as a
14 City Landmark is harmful to the community and counter to the City's commitment
15 to anti-racism and reconciliation, and

16 WHEREAS the Totem Pole was commissioned by local businesspersons,
17 carved by unknown individuals in 1903, and was likely intended to reflect a Tlingit
18 or Haida aesthetic, however City consultations with art historians and tribal
19 representatives suggest the artists were not native carvers, and
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21 WHEREAS the primary motive for the creation of the Totem Pole was
22 economic competition, particularly with Seattle, and the Totem Pole was intended
23 to symbolize the City's connection with the Alaskan trade, and
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25 WHEREAS the Totem Pole is currently in its third position, and was added
26 to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places in 1975, and



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WHEREAS upon review, the Landmarks Commission found that the original nomination form contained factual inaccuracies, including the assertion that the Totem Pole was carved by native carvers from British Columbia; Tlingit and Haida tribal representatives do not believe the Totem Pole has any authentic ceremonial or clan origins, and claim no association with it, and

WHEREAS during discussions of both deaccessioning from the Art Collection and rescission of the historic status of the Totem Pole, tribal members and representatives of the Puyallup, Tlingit and Haida Tribes have clearly stated that the Totem Pole is harmful, including the fact that the faux Northern style contributes to and perpetuates misinformation about the art and culture of Coast Salish peoples of this region, and

WHEREAS on March 14, 2021, the Landmarks Commission voted to begin consideration of “rescission of landmarks designation” per its process in Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.055, and

WHEREAS on May 12, 2021, the Landmarks Commission conducted a public hearing and continued to accept comments through May 22, 2021, with the public comments received being largely in favor of delisting the Totem Pole, and

WHEREAS on May 26, 2021, following review of testimony, the Landmarks Commission unanimously voted to recommend removal of the Totem Pole from the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, and

WHEREAS removal of the Totem Pole from the Tacoma Register of Historic Places will remove a barrier to reconciliation and inclusion with the Puyallup Tribe



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and other native and indigenous people, by ending the celebration of an item of cultural appropriation; Now, Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

That the designation of the Tacoma Totem Pole to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places is hereby rescinded.

Adopted _____

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Deputy City Attorney