

Members

Kevin Bartoy, Chair
Jennifer Mortensen, Vice Chair
Jonathan Hart
Sarah Hilsendeger
Roger Johnson
Alex Morganroth
Lysa Schloesser
Holly Stewart
Carol Sundstrom
Jeff Williams

Deborah Cade, North Slope Ex-Officio
Leah Jaggars, Wedge Ex-Officio

Staff

Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer
Lauren Hoogkamer, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
BT Doan, Administrative Assistant



MINUTES

Landmarks Preservation Commission Planning and Development Services Department

Date: January 27, 2021

Location: *Virtual Zoom Webinar*

Commission Members in Attendance:

Kevin Bartoy, Chair
Jennifer Mortensen, Vice-Chair
Jonathan Hart
Sarah Hilsendeger
Roger Johnson
Alex Morganroth
Lysa Schloesser
Holly Stewart
Carol Sundstrom
Jeff Williams
Deborah Cade

Staff Present:

Reuben McKnight
Lauren Hoogkamer
BT Doan

Others Present:

Steve Victor, *City of Tacoma*
Elliott Barnett, *City of Tacoma*

Commissioner Members Excused:

Leah Jaggars

Commission Members Absent:

N/A

Chair Kevin Bartoy called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

1. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS LANDS**
2. **ROLL CALL**
3. **CONSENT AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as submitted.

a. Approval of Minutes: January 13, 2021

The minutes of the meeting on January 13, 2021 were approved as submitted.

b. Excusal of Absences:

- Leah Jaggars

4. **DEMOLITION REVIEW**

a. 1201 South 4th Street

Mr. McKnight read the staff report as provided in the packet, emphasizing the unusual circumstances of the review and recommending no further historic consideration.

Steve Victor, Deputy City Attorney, cited the Washington State Supreme Court's ruling in the *First United Methodist Church v. Hearing Examiner (Seattle)* in 1996 to explain that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) had the religious freedom and right to demolish its property, even with the intention of selling for

private development in this case. Therefore, the City Attorney's Office advised the Commission to not further review the nomination and not recommend it for listing on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places.

The Commission had clarifying questions regarding the facts argued during the precedent case and interpretation of the religious freedom clause, as well as whose ownership the property would be under during the demolition. Commissioner Hart expressed concerns over not moving forward the recommendation while the property met the threshold criteria to be listed. Commissioner Williams was agreeable to Mr. Victor's legal advice to approve the demolition permit; however, he would like the motion to clearly state that the property appeared to meet the criteria to be on the Register, but due to legal considerations, its demolition could be approved. The topics of salvage, visual records retention, and mitigation measures were also discussed.

Chair Bartoy made a motion: *"I move that the Landmarks Preservation Commission acknowledge the Historic Property report and staff's recommendation, and recognize that the building at 1201 South 4th Street is eligible for listing on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. But given the City Attorney's recommendation about the constitutionality of the listing, the Landmarks Preservation Commission will not move the listing forward for formal consideration to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee, under the knowledge that the current property owner, the Church of LDS, will be conducting the demolition while the property is still under their ownership."*

Commissioner Hart seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

5. PRESERVATION PLANNING/BOARD BUSINESS

a. Home In Tacoma

Mr. McKnight introduced Elliott Barnett, a planner with Planning Services Division, and provided context information for the Home In Tacoma project as well as the input requested from the Commission at this meeting.

Mr. Barnett began by stating the focus of the discussion, which was to solicit feedback from the Commission on how to balance the City's housing goals and historic preservation goals. He presented an overview of the Home In Tacoma project, including its timeline and objectives. The presentation briefly covered housing goals, community feedback, systemic racism patterns still existing to date, and land use framework before dwelling into greater technical details. There were two main categories in this proposal in terms of infilling Missing Middle Housing Types – medium-scale residential and low-scale residential. Mr. Barnett explained each concept in details. He then presented the housing and historic preservation goals, and invited comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Cade expressed a concern about "old" buildings potentially getting demolished to make way for new development while had the buildings stayed, they would have been more affordable. She encouraged turning some of the preservation goals into requirements. She added that neighborhoods with less density should be considered for infill first before those that already had many multi-family buildings such as the North Slope, Wedge, and Stadium Districts. The issue of insufficient parking in dense neighborhoods was also brought up. Commissioner Hart commented that the infill should be applied variously depending on the characters of the neighborhoods; this could be accommodated by different buffer sizes. Commissioner Williams advised caution about infill in historic neighborhoods, saying that dense infill as similarly seen in Ballard or Seattle would be detrimental to historic preservation efforts. He also believed those infilled housing would likely be at market rate or above, rather than affordable. Next, Vice-Chair Mortensen suggested adding requirement about salvaging historic materials to the demolition permitting process. Commissioner Stewart agreed and added that she would like to encourage conversion of single-family dwellings into duplexes or triplexes instead of building new ones. ~~Commissioner Hilsendeger was concerned with the fact that the multi-family tax incentives had not been widely utilized before, they would likely remain that way and new infill housing would not be affordable as a result.~~ Commissioner Hilsendeger was concerned that the 12-year multi-family tax exemption requiring affordable housing was not used nearly as often as the 8-year exemption that did not require affordable housing. She was concerned that new developments would follow that trend and continue to be unaffordable.

In response, Mr. Barnett clarified that there had been an increased use of multi-family tax incentives in recent years. And though infill housing in historic districts would indeed unlikely be affordable for low-income households, they would still help in creating more housing supply for middle-income families. The City was also looking at other tools to address the needs at all income levels.

Commissioner Morganroth pointed out that it would be important to try to preserve and mimic the characters of the neighborhoods. The community usually was more concerned and resistant towards the changes in the neighborhood, and not so much about having more residents. Chair Bartoy concurred with all prior comments, adding that density should be built in available and feasible areas but should also leave room for open spaces and other living amenities. Moreover, he mentioned new developments in Point Ruston and Stadium District that were building density but with no affordability. He further discussed the issue of equity, homeless encampment, gentrification, and displacement – to show that the “housing crisis” going on in the community might not be fully recognized and addressed in the City’s policy plans and discussions.

b. 201 North Yakima Debrief

Mr. McKnight reported to the Commission that the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee voted at their January 13th, 2021 meeting to forward the nomination of 201 North Yakima to the City Council. The next step would be presenting the nomination at the City Council’s Study Session; no date had been scheduled.

Potential scenarios and alternatives for the Commission’s recommendation process were also discussed.

6. CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Bartoy expressed appreciation for the Commission’s participation and thoughtful discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

**These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length audio recording of the meeting, please visit: <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=67980>*