



Historic Districts in Tacoma

City of Tacoma | Planning and Development Services

Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee
June 8, 2022



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INTRODUCTION



- Provide an overview of historic districts in Tacoma
- Review of existing districts
- Process for creating districts
- Current initiatives



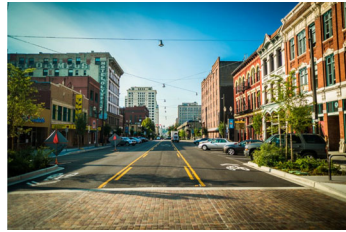
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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



- Tacoma has nine designated historic districts
- Districts may be listed on one, multiple or all historic registers
 - National Register of Historic Places
 - Washington State Heritage Register
 - Tacoma Register of Historic Places
- Each type of register listing has specific process for creation and specific requirements/effects



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS

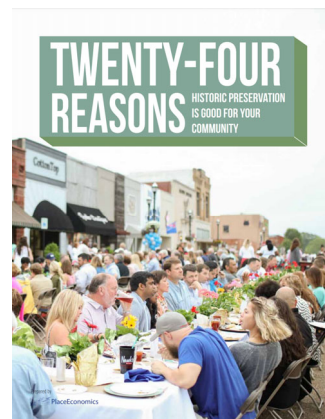


Why Historic Districts

- Supported by the Comprehensive Plan
- Economic benefits: investment, adaptive reuse
- Human-scale, walkable/bikeable
- Protects existing housing stock
- Often contain a mix of types predating zoning

Myths

- Does not "freeze" an area in time
- Does not discourage new construction/infill
- Most development proposals approved



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



National Register of Historic Places

- Proposed district must meet register eligibility criteria
- Requires research and documentation of all buildings
- Process administered by the State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- Requires consultation with local jurisdictions



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Washington State Heritage Register

- Proposed district must meet register eligibility criteria
- Requires research and documentation of all buildings
- Process administered by the State DAHP
- Requires consultation with local jurisdictions
- "Honorary listing"



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Tacoma Register of Historic Places

- Proposed district must meet register eligibility criteria
- Requires research and documentation of all buildings
- Process administered by the Tacoma Historic Preservation Office
- Requires creation of an Historic Overlay Zone



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Tacoma Register of Historic Places

- For residential historic districts:
 - Historic approval is required for visible exterior work that requires building permits
 - Interior work, work that is not visible, and minor maintenance does not require review
 - Demolition within local historic districts is strongly discouraged
 - Tax incentives may be available for renovations to historic buildings



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ABOUT HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Comparison of effects for each type of district

	Design Review required for permits	Demolition review required	Other requirements
National Register Historic District (NR)	No	Yes (requires Landmarks Commission to consider whether a property is "individually significant" per TMC 13.12.570)	Review for impacts from federal undertakings (funding, permits, federal property) Environmental review
Washington State Heritage Register (WHR)	No	No	Executive Order 21-02 Environmental review
Tacoma Register of Historic Places (TR)	Yes – for exterior work that requires permits and new construction	Yes (applicant must demonstrate no feasible alternatives to demolition)	Environmental review

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TACOMA'S DISTRICTS



District	Year Created	Register	Notes
Old City Hall	1978	NR, WHR, TR*	~45 buildings built 1888-1920s; civic center of Tacoma
Union Depot/Warehouse	1983	NR, WHR, TR	~40 buildings built 1889-1955; industrial/rail center
North Slope	1994, 1996, 1999	NR, WHR, TR	~950 houses 1881-1955; residential neighborhood
Wedge Neighborhood	2011	NR, WHR, TR	
Buckley's Addition	2016	NR, WHR	~590 buildings 1890-1941
College Park	2017	NR, WHR (TR proposed)	~582 buildings 1890-1960
Stadium-Seminary	1977	NR, WHR	~400 buildings; 1888-1930
Salmon Beach	1976	WHR	
South J Street	1986	NR, WHR, TR	8 houses; Tacoma listed as individual buildings

* NR=National Register, WHR=Washington Heritage Register, TR=Tacoma Register

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DISTRICT CREATION



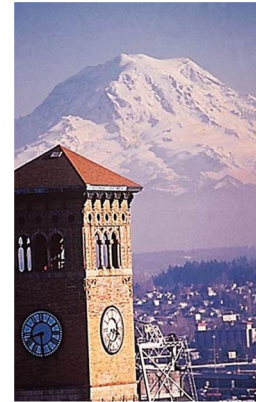
District Creation

National/State Register nominations require review and approval by state and federal governments

- Local government consultation is required; concurrence is not

Tacoma Register nominations require approval by Landmarks Commission, Planning Commission and City Council

- Administered as overlay zones



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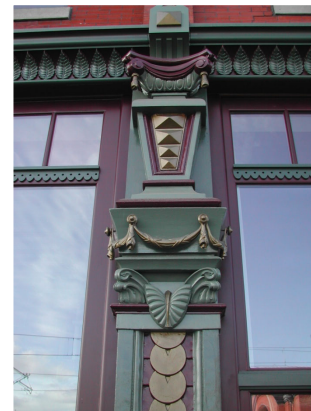
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DISTRICT CREATION



Process – National Register v. Local Register

- National/State Register nominations do not follow same notice procedures as local
- Local nominations are legislative actions; National/state nominations are not
- Local nominations have land use regulations attached



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DISTRICT CREATION



Process – Local nominations

- Local designation requires sequential Landmarks, Planning and City Council approval
- Local nomination process defined by TMC 13.07.060; directs Planning Commission to review recommendations under TMC 13.05.030.B¹



¹Note: code reference is TMC 13.02.053, which has been renumbered to 13.05.030.

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DISTRICT CREATION



Process – Local nominations

- Landmarks Commission and Planning Commission use different criteria in evaluating proposals
- National Register nominations do not go through a land use amendment process and the boundaries can differ slightly
- Unlike other zoning recommendations, historic districts require a positive recommendation from Planning Commission for the proposal to be referred to Council



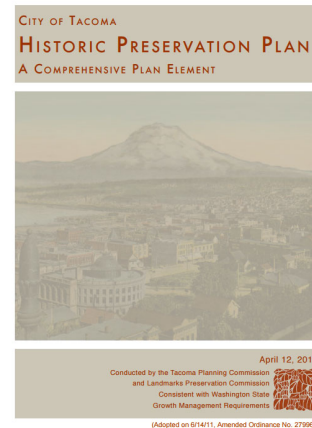
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PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

Questions – Local nominations

- How to improve coordination between Landmarks and Planning Commission (process, criteria, etc)
 - Landmarks criteria focus on historic significance.
 - Should the Commission consider other factors, or should the Commission's role be more clearly defined?
 - Should the Planning Commission process align with other zoning amendments
- How can the City be more proactive in the historic district nomination process?
- How can National Register District nominations be better coordinated with City land use policies



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CURRENT INITIATIVES

College Park Historic District Overlay Zone

- Initiated by request of neighborhood residents
- Petition, postcards and nomination submitted to Landmarks Commission
- Same boundaries as the existing National Register Historic District, created in 2017
- Borders north and east sides of the University of Puget Sound, from North 21st to Pine, to North 8th to North Union Ave
- Includes approximately 582 houses



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CURRENT INITIATIVES



College Park Historic District Overlay Zone – Review Steps

Date	Topic
June 2021 – Jan 2022	Landmarks Preservation Commission Review
Feb. 9, 2022	Landmarks Preservation Commission Public Hearing
April 13, 2022	Landmarks Preservation Commission Findings and Recommendations
May 4, 2022	Planning Commission – Introduction and set hearing date
June 1, 2022	Planning Commission Public Hearing
July 20, 2022 (Tent.)	Planning Commission Review of Testimony and discussion
July – Sep., 2022 (Tent.)	Planning Commission Findings and Recommendation to City Council

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CURRENT INITIATIVES



Landmarks Preservation Commission Recommendations

1. College Park Historic District is eligible for historic designation under the criteria in TMC 13.07
2. To reduce burden on residents, district guidelines should include exemptions for nonvisible elevations and relaxed requirements for alterations to secondary elevations
3. The TMC provisions for historic nominations and comprehensive plan Historic Preservation Element should be revised to be consistent with the City's policies on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion
4. Strategies and resources should be identified to support proactive preservation work in underserved areas of the city
5. TMC should be reviewed for improved coordination between Planning and Landmarks Commissions

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