



**TO:** Elizabeth A. Pauli, 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 Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 901-909 North J Street, as a City Landmark and placing said property on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places – February 6, 2024  
**DATE:** January 22, 2024

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution designating the Immanuel Presbyterian Church complex, located at 901-909 North J 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 four buildings that comprise the Immanuel Presbyterian Church complex are representative of the development and growth of early Protestant congregations in Tacoma. They were all designed by noted Tacoma architects and are all significant examples of their type. Although two of the buildings, the manse and education building, have seen minor recent alterations, they individually and collectively retain a substantial integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The period of significance for the complex is 1908 to 1959 (original construction and additions). The complex and its buildings are individually eligible for the Tacoma Register of Historic Places under the following criteria:

- Criterion C as embodying the distinctive characteristics of Mission Revival, Craftsman and Contemporary style buildings. Major Tacoma architects, Ambrose J. Russell, Luther Twichell, Frederick & Stanley Shaw, and Lea, Pearson & Richards, designed these four buildings. Additionally, the Immanuel Church building has been called out as an outstanding example of the Mission Revival style in Washington State. It also abuts the individually, locally listed Henry O. & Jeanette Geiger house (912 North I Street).
- Criterion E as the buildings are already listed as contributing structures within the locally designated North Slope Historic District as well as in the Tacoma’s North Slope Washington Heritage District and the Tacoma’s North Slope National Register District.
- Criterion G due to the church building being represented on post cards, various walking tours, the Tacoma Historic Homes Tour and its popular events and concerts such as Sunday Blues Vespers. It is also an established and visible feature of the North Slope and Stadium neighborhoods and the city.



Founded in 1888, Immanuel Presbyterian Church's congregation is one of Tacoma's oldest continuing religious organizations. The Immanuel Church sanctuary is the only example of Mission Revival of religious architecture in Tacoma, and it was designed by Ambrose J. Russell, one of Tacoma's premier architects. Completed in 1908, it is among Tacoma's oldest existing church buildings. It is listed and pictured as an exemplary example of Mission Revival style in *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State* and is also listed in *The Keystone of Tacoma*.

The nomination was received by the Historic Preservation Office in June 2023. On August 23, 2023, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) scheduled the nomination for a public hearing on October 11, 2023. Following the hearing, the LPC voted unanimously to recommend designation of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places for meeting Criteria C, E, 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 may 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: High Opportunity**

Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

**Livability: Equity Index Score: Very High 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.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact.

**ATTACHMENT:**

Map of property location