HISTORIC PRESERVATION RESOURCE GUIDE
CHAPTER THREE: THE TACOMA LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION AND LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

TACOMA LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Community and Economic Development Department
747 Market Street, Room 1036
Tacoma, WA 98402-3793
253.591.5200
landmarks@cityoftacoma.org
www.tacomaculture.org/historic/about.asp

About the Program
The Historic Preservation Program is part of Building and Land Use Services within the Community and Economic Development Department.

The Historic Preservation Office provides support to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, maintains and reviews nominations to Tacoma's Landmarks Register, reviews applications for changes to historic landmarks, and provides assistance to the public and other government agencies regarding historic preservation issues.

Historic Preservation Ordinances
The Tacoma Historic Preservation Program is governed by two ordinances: the Landmarks Preservation Commission code (TMC 1.42) and the Landmarks and Historic Special Review Districts Code (TMC 13.07).

What is the LPC?
The Landmarks Preservation Commission is an 11 member volunteer commission made up of Tacoma residents and professionals, appointed by the City Council through the Council's Appointments process. The Landmarks Preservation Commission is established by Tacoma Municipal Code 1.42. Tacoma's Landmarks and Historic Districts are regulated by TMC 13.07. Commissioners represent a variety of professional expertise, including architecture, history, planning, construction, engineering, real estate, the arts and art history, in addition to three at large members.

The Commission reviews and approves applications for changes to registered Landmarks and buildings within local historic districts, reviews nominations and advises City Council regarding additions to the Landmarks Register, and participates in the planning process.

Monthly Meetings
The Landmarks Commission meets every second and fourth Wednesday, except during November and December when there is only one meeting per month.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES
There are over 1,300 properties in the City of Tacoma listed at the local, state and national levels, either as individually designated properties or within designated historic districts.

Tacoma City Landmarks
The City of Tacoma maintains the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, which includes individually registered City Landmarks in addition to Historic Districts and Conservation Districts. Properties are nominated to the Register by the Landmarks Commission, and designated by City Council resolution. Changes to the exteriors of City Landmark properties must be approved by the Landmarks Commission.

There are over 130 properties individually listed on Tacoma's Register of Historic Places, ranging in age from the 1870s through 1940. Landmark buildings and properties are scattered throughout the city, and represent a wide variety of perspectives, architectural design, and local history.

Tacoma Register Historic Districts
Locally, historic districts are listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places through a nomination process. If the Landmarks Preservation Commission approves the nomination, the recommendation for district establishment if referred to the Planning Commission, which may recommend to City Council creation of a new overlay historic zoning district. This overlay introduces certain protections for historic districts.

About Historic Districts
Historic districts are areas of the City that have been determined to possess special character, related development patterns, and that convey the environment of certain areas during specific periods of time.
NOMINATING A LANDMARK

Properties and districts are placed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places through a nomination process. Nominations received by the Landmarks Commission are reviewed and, if found to meet the criteria for designation, recommended to City Council for designation.

In general, the process takes between 4 and 6 months. Properties intending to apply for Special Tax Valuation for the coming year MUST be nominated by June of that year.

When looking at a potential landmark, it is useful to ask yourself several questions such as: what about this building sets it apart from others like it (its excellent condition, or unique design); why is it important (as an example of a type of building, its association with a significant person, or for its contribution to local history, or because it is unique); and is it in fair or original condition?

For single-family residences, common modifications that generally disqualify a home from consideration as a landmark include inappropriate window retrofitting (i.e. vinyl or aluminum windows), changes to cladding (i.e. vinyl, aluminum or T-111 panel), enclosed porches, and second-story additions or new dormers.

To be eligible, properties must be found to meet the threshold criteria for listing on the register, as well as at least one of the Landmarks Criteria (below). Although this may sound daunting, many properties that are over 50 years old and in close to original condition qualify.

Threshold criteria include:

- 50 years old or older at the time of nomination
- Retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association such that it is able to convey its historical, cultural, or architectural significance

The six Landmarks criteria are:

A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; or
Basics of the Landmarks Nomination Process

1. Contact the Historic Preservation Officer.
   The Historic Preservation Officer can assist you in determining whether your building is historic. The city has inventoried hundreds of historic buildings during the last 20 years and we may have information on your building already. In addition, you can pick up nomination forms at the office, as well as samples and research sources or copy of the Tacoma Landmark Nomination form from this web site. The actual criteria upon which your application will be evaluated is established in the Tacoma Municipal Code.

2. Do the research.
   To successfully nominate a building to the Register, it is necessary to thoroughly document both its physical and cultural history. Useful tools include old newspaper articles, property records, photographic archives, and city directories. The Northwest Room at the main branch of the Tacoma Public Library is one of the best archives of historic photos and records in the region. You can also find historical information about your property in the County Tax Assessor's records and from previous owners. The Tacoma Historical Society and the State History Museum are also good resources.

   For larger or more complex projects, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation maintains a list of historic preservation consultants. To download the document please visit http://preservewa.org/Current-Directory.aspx

3. Complete the nomination form.
   When you have gathered historical information on your building, use the nomination form to record its history. You will need to describe the physical appearance and condition of the building in Section 7 of the form, and discuss what role the building has played in Tacoma's history in Section 8. Once you have completed a first draft, or if you have questions about completing the form, contact the Historic Preservation Office.

4. Landmarks Commission Review.
   When your nomination is complete, the Historic Preservation Officer will schedule it for a preliminary review before the Landmarks Commission. If the Landmarks Commission finds that the property meets the threshold criteria (above), it will be scheduled for a special public meeting. If approved, the nomination is then forwarded to City Council.

   The City Council votes on the Designation at their next available agenda.
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EFFECTS OF LISTING
Once designated, changes to City Landmarks are subject to design review by the Landmarks Commission to ensure preservation of historic character. In addition, such projects may qualify the property for the City's Special Tax Valuation Program.

Special Tax Valuation-a local program
In 1985, the Washington State Legislature passed a law that allows local governments to offer tax relief for historic property owners in the form of reduced property taxes. Through the Special Tax Valuation Program, property owners who complete a substantial rehabilitation within a period of two years may benefit from reduced property taxes for a period of ten years. Since 1986, the City of Tacoma has approved over $100 million in Special Tax Valuation investment into its historic properties.

How It Works
Generally, qualified expenses associated with a rehabilitation project that meet the requirements below are subtracted from the property assessment each year for 10 years. Property taxes are still paid on the balance, although in some cases a substantial rehabilitation project's costs may exceed the assessed value of the property for several years, effectively negating property taxes.

This "special valuation" of the property offsets potential increase in taxes caused by building improvements and helps owners regain their investment efficiently. Special Valuation may be applied for repeatedly as long as the requirements are met and the qualified expenditures do not exceed the assessed value of the property.

The City does not lose tax revenue in the process, because prior to rehabilitation, most historic buildings in the program are underutilized and generate low revenues. A building increases dramatically in value following a project, and following the 10 year period, returns to a significantly higher assessed value on the tax rolls.

Requirements
Expenses claimed must be reasonably associated with the historic rehabilitation and must occur within a building's original envelope. Additional requirements include:

- Property must be listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places
- Rehabilitation costs must equal at least 25% of the assessed value of the building itself prior to renovation
- All project costs must fall within a working period of 24 consecutive months
- "Rehabilitation Expenditures" that generally qualify include the costs associated with design, materials and construction necessary to bring a building to a state of modern convenience, but do not include costs associated with acquisition of the property or for work to expand the building's size
• The project must meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

• Renovations must not adversely affect historically significant building's character defining elements

Buildings in historic districts are usually eligible. Historic properties not already listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places can be placed on the Tacoma Register though a nomination and review procedure.

Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program (HRTC)
The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program is a one-time federal income tax credit for the costs associated with rehabilitation of historic buildings, jointly administered by the National Park Service and the IRS. The most commonly used tax credit is the 20% credit for income producing properties.

This program is jointly administered by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) coordinates projects using the Federal HRTC.

Basic requirements include:

• Property must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places

• Property must be a building

• The rehabilitation must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties and the design must be approved by the National Park Service in advance

• Property must be depreciable--that is, an income producing property (and therefore not the applicant's primary residence)
WHAT STANDARDS APPLY TO MY PROJECT?
The Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission uses several sets of standards and guidelines to evaluate the appropriateness of proposed changes to historic buildings, including:

- The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- The National Park Service's Preservation Briefs
- Historic District Design Guidelines for individual historic districts (including the North Slope Historic District and Union Depot/Warehouse Historic District).

This page is intended to provide access to the primary standards used for the review of projects involving historic properties in Tacoma.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings
First published in 1976 by the National Park Service, these standards are the primary basis for reviewing the appropriateness of changes to historic properties. The links to the right are chapters excerpted from the 1991 Illustrated Guidelines. *(The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. US Department of the Interior: National Park Service. Available from the US Government Printing Office, or online).*

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation
REHABILITATION IS DEFINED AS the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

For more illustrated examples of application of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, please visit http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm
WHAT IS DESIGN REVIEW?
Design review is an approval process that certain projects involving historic properties must complete prior to the start of work, or issuance of permits.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission reviews projects for historic compatibility at its regular public meetings, and if the work meets the standards for historic treatment, issues a certificate of approval.

Does my project require review by the Landmarks Commission?
In general, exterior work on City Landmarks that is visible requires design review. In the North Slope Historic District, changes that require building permits require review before permits can be issued.

What is the process for design review?
Most simple projects take a total of about four weeks for the Commission to review, from submittal of application until approval. More complex projects usually require several meetings, including informational briefings in design development and schematic, in addition to final design review.

Here are the general steps of the process:

1. Review the Standards and Guidelines for Historic Buildings. Many property owners want to know whether their project will be approved by the Commission ahead of the meeting. The Landmarks Commission reviews projects according to its Standards, which include design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Rehabilitation. In some cases, pre-application meetings or Commission briefings are beneficial for larger or more complex projects. Contact the Historic Preservation Officer (bottom of page) for more information.

2. Download the appropriate application form and fill it out in its ENTIRETY. The form is available online.

3. Submit your plans for preliminary review to the Buildings and Land Use Division (BLUS). This ensures your application meets applicable codes and will avoid delays down the road. Projects requiring variances generally must obtain the variances prior to Landmarks Commission review.

4. Submit your plans to the Historic Preservation Office, either:

   a. Via regular mail or in person: make 15 copies of the application form and any supporting materials, and deliver to the address below along with the APPLICATION FEE payable to the City Treasurer.

   b. Via email/electronically: Complete your application and submit it, and any attachments, via email (landmarks@cityoftacoma.org, subject line
5. Scheduling. Once your application is received, staff will review it for completeness and schedule it for the next available agenda. The Landmarks Commission meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month, and applications must be complete TWO WEEKS in advance of the desired meeting date. When your application has been scheduled for review, you will be notified.

6. Present your application to the Commission. In most cases, it is required that the applicant be present to respond to questions or recommendations from the Commission.

7. Apply for permits. Once the Commission has reviewed your application, generally a decision is reached at the same meeting. Once an approval is granted, you may obtain permits. Incomplete applications, or requests for clarification, may result in the item being moved to a subsequent agenda.

Questions?
Questions regarding building codes, zoning, variances, commercial plan review, and other concerns should be directed to:

Buildings and Land Use Services
Community and Economic Development Department
747 Market Street, 3rd Floor
253-591-5030
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Tacoma's Historic Districts
Tacoma has five historic districts, including three that are listed on the local Tacoma Register (TR), four that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR), and four that are listed on the Washington Heritage Register (WR).
TACOMA’S HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Union Depot/Warehouse Historic Special Review District
The Union Depot-Warehouse Historic District (National Register of Historic Places, 1980, and Tacoma Register, 1983) flanks Pacific Avenue from South 17th Street to South 23rd Street and extends up the hill to Jefferson Avenue. The Union Depot-Warehouse District is surrounded by the Union Station Conservation District.

The architecture in the district is characterized by rugged brick warehouses and factories, examples of commercial high style and industrial vernacular architecture developed in America in the early 1900s. The district was a major distribution point for goods that arrived by railway during the 1890s through the 1920s.

Union Station (1911) itself is a stunning landmark, with its massive arches and a copper-clad dome. The adaptive reuse of Union Station as a Federal Courthouse earned the City of Tacoma a National Preservation Honor Award in 1994.

In 1999, the National Preservation Honor Award again came to Tacoma with the University of Washington, Tacoma’s adaptive reuse of the warehouse buildings along Pacific as its new urban campus. Other buildings in the district are being rehabilitated for use as apartments, businesses, restaurants and shops. Many of the projects in the Union Depot/Warehouse District are outstanding examples of historically sensitive adaptive reuse.

Old City Hall Historic Special Review District
The Old City Hall Historic District (National Register of Historic Places, 1977, and Tacoma Register, 1978) includes some of Tacoma’s most architecturally important buildings, and served as the City’s early commercial, governmental, and entertainment center from 1886 through the 1920s.

High on a bluff overlooking Commencement Bay, this fascinating area provides the best glimpse into the past during the days of boomtown Tacoma. It has been said that the city did not grow; it arrived - by rail - when it was selected as the western terminus for the Northern Pacific Railroad mighty transcontinental line.
Old City Hall (1892), which reflects the grand ambitions of the time, is an outstanding example of the height of the Italianate style in America. Other striking buildings are found throughout the district, including the Northern Pacific Headquarters (1888), the Beaux Arts Elks Temple (1916), and the Winthrop Hotel (1925). Smaller brick buildings from the time remain as reminders of Whiskey Row, the entertainment district that once thrived on the wages of dock workers and politicians. New uses continue to thrive as buildings are rehabilitated for office, retail and unique urban residences, maintaining the historic character of old Tacoma.

North Slope Historic Special Review District
Tacoma boasts one of the largest neighborhood historic districts in the country with the North Slope Historic Special Review district, which is listed on the Tacoma, Washington State, and National Registers of Historic Places. The North Slope Historic District encompasses more than 950 properties.

This district was created in response to an initiative from residents who value the atmosphere these historic homes create in the neighborhood. Few homes in the district are high style; instead the neighborhood is composed primarily of middle class Victorian, Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Foursquare style houses, representing a fine collection of Pacific Northwest versions of the residential architecture popular in the United States prior to World War II.

Residents today take great pride in their historic homes, beautiful streets, and enjoy the experience of living a traditional neighborhood lifestyle. Street signs mark the extent of the North Slope Historic District, which extends from North I Street to North Grant Avenue, and between Division Avenue and Steele Street, in the angle where Tacoma's street grid adjusts to follow the shoreline and link Old Town, developed in the 1870s, with New Tacoma which was built to meet the railroad line in the 1890s.

Stadium Seminary Historic District
Tacoma's high-style residential district, the Stadium Seminary National Historic District, is listed on the National Register (1977). The Stadium- Seminary District occupies beautiful tree-lined avenues between North I Street and the shoreline, and between First Street and North 10th Street. A stroll or drive through the Stadium- Seminary District, with its...
stunning views of Puget Sound, provides insight into the lives of the early lumber barons and railroad executives. The area is important because it is one of the earliest residential areas of Tacoma and it contains outstanding examples of high style home building from the late 19th to the early 20th century.

**Salmon Beach Historic District**

The district at Salmon Beach is listed on the Washington Heritage Register, and represents a rare glimpse of the waterfront lifestyle from the first part of the 20th century. The original community was a collection of approximately 100 cabins built on stilts at the base of a steep bluff bordering the Tacoma Narrows. Several cabins, including Cabin #97 (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) are in close to original condition, representing the small, intimate and independent character of the historic Salmon Beach community.

**Wedge Neighborhood Historic District**

This district was established on May 24, 2011 by City Council Ordinance #27981, in response to a request submitted in 2008 by neighborhood residents.

The Wedge Neighborhood is significant in its representation of a pre-WWII middle class Tacoma neighborhood, and the profiles of its residents, which cut across professions and background, tell a typical story of an emerging community.

The original Wedge settlers were a very diverse group of people from all walks of life, from many parts of the country, and from many other parts of the world. Many of these early residents were born in Germany, Sweden, Norway and England. They brought their languages, foods, culture and religions. included professionals, laborers, merchants and the clergy. Some owners of large homes took in boarders and extended-family members. The population included pioneers, successful merchants and businessmen, European immigrants, westward travelers, as well as professionals and civil servants.
Call the City of Tacoma Community Initiatives Division for walking tour guides and literature about historic districts and landmark buildings. For more information contact the Historic Preservation Office at 253-591-5191.

The Tacoma Public Library and Historic Tacoma also have a repository of walking tours. For more information contact:

Tacoma Public Library
Main Branch
1102 Tacoma Avenue South
Tacoma, WA 98402
(253) 591-5666

Or visit Historic Tacoma’s webpage to download the guides.
http://www.historictacoma.org/ht/tacoma-tours/