

Introduction to the North Slope Historic District

The North Slope Historic District encompasses more than 950 properties and is one of the largest residential historic districts in the nation. It represents the early history of Tacoma's citizens from the 1880s to the 1940s. The District contains outstanding examples of local domestic architecture, including Victorian, Craftsman and other northwestern applications of popular styles. The neighborhood was settled by some of Tacoma's builders and outstanding citizens. Residents today take great pride in their historic homes, beautiful streets, and enjoy the experience of living a traditional neighborhood lifestyle.

The North Slope Historic District was created by its residents. The District was designated as a local historic district in 1995 and expanded in 1999. It was designated to the Washington Heritage Register and National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

What Projects Require Design Review?

If your house is located within the boundaries of the historic district, then changes to the exterior of your property may require design review by the Historic Preservation Officer and the Landmarks Preservation Commission if permits are required, as required in TMC 13.07.360. This includes changes to windows, siding, additions, chimneys, porches and decks.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission uses the North Slope Design Guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties to evaluate the appropriateness of proposed alterations.

Your project will require Landmarks Preservation Commission review, if:

- ...It is a new construction project or demolition; or
- ...It involves a contributing historic structure, AND
- ...It involves exterior work, AND
- ...It requires a building permit.

A project is exempt, if:

- ...The project involves a non-contributing structure, but does not involve demolition; or
- ...The project does not require a permit; or
- ...The project does not involve any exterior work; or
- ...The project involves plumbing, sewer, electrical, or landscaping work.

General Steps to Landmarks Preservation Commission approval (typical)

1. Assemble LPC application and visit Permit Counter for code compliance check
2. Submit 20 copies of application and application fee (2 weeks ahead of meeting)
3. Preliminary review before full Commission meeting (if necessary)
4. LPC meeting and action on the application.
5. Written approval generated by Historic Preservation Officer after meeting.
6. Apply for Building Permits

What is the Landmarks Preservation Commission?

- In 1974, the City Council created the Landmarks Preservation Commission, a body appointed to identify, preserve and recommend for designation historic landmarks within the city.
- The Historic Preservation Officer in the Tacoma Economic Development Department staffs the Commission.
- The Landmarks Preservation Commission responsibilities include design review for changes proposed to any historic building listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places.
- The Commission also reviews nominations for the Tacoma Register of Historic Places and Special Tax applications then passes its recommendations on to the City Council for final approval.
- The Commission meets twice monthly on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 5 p.m.

Questions?

Check out our website at www.tacomaculture.org, or contact:

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What are the Guidelines?

The following are the guidelines excerpted from TMC 13.07.360 for the North Slope Historic District.

Guidelines for building design and streetscape improvement review of the North Slope Historic Special Review District.

A. Intent. These guidelines are intended to ensure a certainty of design quality within the North Slope Historic Special Review District, protect the historic fabric of the District, enhance the economic vitality of the District through promotion of its architectural character, and provide a clear set of physical design parameters for property owners, developers, designers and public agencies. These guidelines are hereby established as the design review guidelines for rehabilitation, new construction and public amenities.

The following guidelines are also intended to provide a basic set of standards for architectural and physical design within the North Slope Historic Special Review District. These guidelines will be used by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission as a base-line for the design review process. These guidelines will also assist owners, developers, and designers involved in project planning by providing general design and technical recommendations. When applying the guidelines, the Commission will be considerate of clearly documented cases of economic hardship or deprivation of the owner's reasonable use of the property.

B. Approval of Exterior Changes to Buildings, Structures and Other Public Amenities (as identified in subsection E of this section) within the North Slope Historic Special Review District. No person shall alter, demolish, construct, reconstruct, restore, remodel, or otherwise make any material change to the exterior appearance of any building that has been designated as a Pivotal, Primary, or Secondary structure in the North Slope Historic Special Review District, and no permit for the same shall be issued prior to the approval by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission as provided in this chapter. No permits for new structures on presently undeveloped sites, or new structures on sites occupied by a non-contributing building, shall be issued without conformance to the design principles herein detailed. All such designs shall be approved by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission.

C. Exemption. The following actions are exempt from the requirements imposed pursuant to this section:

1. Any alterations to non-contributing structures; provided, that the demolition of such structures is not exempt from the provisions of this chapter;
2. Interior modifications to existing structures, unless those modifications affect the exterior appearance of the structure;
3. Any work that does not require a building permit (including painting and minor repairs such as caulking or weather-stripping);

4. The installation, alteration, or repair of public and private plumbing, sewer, water, and gas piping systems;
5. The installation, alteration, or repair of electrical, telephone, and cable television wiring systems;
6. The landscaping of private residences;
7. The maintenance of existing parking conditions and configurations, including curb cuts, driveways, alleys, and parking lots;
8. Signs not exceeding the limitations for a home occupation permit and those installed by the City of Tacoma for directional and locational purposes.

D. Design Guidelines. The following predominant building elements in the district shall be recognized as essential to the historic image of the neighborhood, and shall be utilized as the basis for design review of proposals for rehabilitation and new construction within the district.

1. Height. Goal: Balance the overall height of new construction with that of nearby structures. In the rehabilitation of existing buildings, the present height of the structure should remain intact. New buildings should step down to be comparable in height to adjacent structures.
2. Scale. Goal: Relate the size and proportion of new buildings to those of the neighborhood. Scale refers to a building's comparative relationship to neighboring structures, and its fit within the district. Building facades should be of a scale compatible with surrounding buildings, and maintain a comparable setback from the property line to adjacent buildings, as permitted by applicable zoning regulations.

Scale is also determined by the proportions of the architectural elements within the composition of the individual building facades. Window and door proportions (including the design of sash and frames), floor heights, floor shapes, roof shapes and pitches, and other elements of the building exterior should relate to the scale of the neighborhood.

3. Massing. Goal: Break up the facades of buildings into smaller varied masses, comparable to those contributing buildings in the neighborhood. Variety of forms is a distinguishing characteristic of the North Slope residential community. Smaller massing – the arrangement of facade details, such as projections and recesses – and porches all help to articulate the exterior of the structure and help the structure fit into the neighborhood.
4. Sense of Entry. Goal: Emphasize entrances to structures. Entrances should be located on the front facade of the building and highlighted with architectural details, such as raised platforms, porches, or porticos, to draw attention to the entry.

Entrances not located on the front facade should be easily recognizable from the street.

5. **Roof Shapes and Materials.** Goal: Utilize traditional roof shapes, pitches, and compatible finish materials on all new structures, porches, additions, and detached outbuildings wherever such elements are visible from the street. Maintain the present roof pitches of existing Pivotal, Primary, and Secondary buildings where such elements are visible from the street.

Typically, the existing, historic buildings in the neighborhood either have gable roofs with the slopes of the roofs between 5:12 to 12:12 or more, and with the pitch oriented either parallel to or perpendicular to the public right-of-way, or have hipped roofs with roof slopes somewhat lower. Most roofs also have architectural details, such as cross gables, dormers, and/or widow's walks, to break up the large sloped planes of the roof. Wide roof overhangs, decorative eaves or brackets, and cornices can be creatively used to enhance the appearance of the roof.

6. **Exterior Materials.** Goals: Use compatible materials that respect the visual appearance of the surrounding buildings. Buildings in the North Slope Neighborhood were sided with shingles, or with lapped, horizontal wood siding of various widths. Subsequently, a few compatible brick or stucco-covered structures were constructed, although many later uses of these two materials do not fit the character of the neighborhood. Additions to existing buildings should be sided with a material to match, or be compatible with, the original or existing materials. New structures should utilize exterior materials similar to those typically found in the neighborhood.
7. **Rhythm of Openings.** Goals: Respect the patterns and orientations of door and window openings as represented in the neighboring buildings. Typically, older buildings have doors and transoms that matched the head height of the adjacent windows. Doors also tend to be paneled, or contain glazed openings. Windows are vertically oriented. Large horizontal expanses of glass are created by ganging two or more windows into a series. Most windows are either single or double hung, with a few casement windows being incorporated into the designs. Many of the buildings had the upper sash articulated into smaller panels, either with muntin bars, leaded glazing, or arches. Most older windows were also surrounded with substantial trim pieces or window head trim.
8. **Additional Construction.** Goal: Sensitively locate additions, penthouses, buildings systems equipment or roof-mounted structures to allow the architectural and historical qualities of the contributing building to be dominant. While additions to contributing buildings in historic districts are not discouraged, they should be located to conceal them from view from the public

right-of-way. Some new additions, such as the reconstruction of missing porches or the addition of dormers in the roof, may need to be located on the front facade of the building. When an addition is proposed for the front of the building, appropriate and sensitive designs for such modifications should follow the guidelines for scale, massing, rhythm and materials.

9. **Parking.** Goal: Minimize views of parking and garages from the public right-of-way. Most early houses provided space for storing various means of transportation, from horses and carriages to automobiles; however, these structures were nearly always entered from the alley rather than from the street. Parking lots and banks of garage doors along the front facade of a building do not conform to the character of the neighborhood. Off-street parking lots have no historic precedent in this neighborhood, and should be located behind the building and away from the street. Access may be allowed from the street if access from the alley is not possible. Setting garages and carport structures back from the front of the building reduces their visual importance.
10. **Signage.** Goal: New signs for existing and new buildings shall complement the architecture and style of the residential neighborhood.

Signs should not dominate the building facades, or obscure the structure's architectural features. Colors, materials, and lettering should be appropriate to the character of the surroundings, and be compatible with the building's period and style. Care should be taken not to damage historic building materials in the installation process.

11. **Street Improvements.** The architectural character of the district is significantly enhanced by the complementary residential nature of existing street amenities, including brick and cobblestone street paving, historic streetlights, planting strips, sidewalks, historic scoring patterns in walks and driveways, healthy trees, and a restrained use of signage. These elements shall be retained or enhanced. (Ord. 26144 § 3; passed Oct. 28, 1997; Ord. 25747 § 1; passed Aug. 8, 1995)

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

1. A property shall 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 shall be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall 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 the historic properties, shall not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used.
8. Archeological resources shall be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall 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 shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.