

*Spring 2024*

# South Tacoma Way Neighborhood Plan: Walking Tour WITH PRETTY GRITTY TOURS

On April 13, 2024, the Neighborhood Planning Program hosted a walking tour of the South Tacoma Way Neighborhood in collaboration with Pretty Gritty Tours. Led by a local guide, approximately 40 community members explored the neighborhood's vibrant history and unique

identity. The tour commenced at 5050 South Tacoma Way, winding through the predominantly residential areas surrounding the business district, before concluding in front of the historic Odd Fellows Hall. This event was free and open to the public as part of the City of Tacoma's Neighborhood Planning Program.

## About the Neighborhood Planning Program

The City of Tacoma's Neighborhood Planning Program provides enhanced planning and development support to help communities create strong, vibrant, and diverse neighborhoods. In South Tacoma, the Neighborhood Planning Program is addressing issues such as identity and history, environmental health, business district vitality, housing affordability, transportation impacts, public safety, and other special projects as identified by the community. The program begins with a robust community engagement phase, and then moves into implementation of key neighborhood strategies.

## What We Learned

The tour highlighted:

- The original pioneering farm families that settled the area and named it Hunt's Prairie in the mid-1800s
- The role of the Northern Pacific Railway in shaping the area that would become the South Tacoma Business District, originally known as the Edison community
  - Railway repair shops were moved to South Tacoma from downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods sprang up throughout the 1890s to accommodate laborers and their families
  - Businesses, hotels, churches, schools, and recreation later emerged to meet the needs of the working class community
- Different architectural styles that are modern-day markers of periods of wealth in South Tacoma, such as the railroad boom (1890s) and post-war boom (1940s), and ensuing periods of scarcity, such as the Great Depression (1930s)
- Historic landmarks and gathering spaces such as theatres, the North Pacific Bank, Visitation Church and the Newbert Building
- Growth along South Tacoma Way during the automobile era in the 1940s
  - Old Highway 99 stretched from one end of the Pacific coast to the other, and South Tacoma Way was one of the busiest stretches along this route
  - Large number of automotive businesses today are a testament to this era
  - Ongoing changes in neighborhood character and composition





# Photos





