

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Element Overview

The Historic Preservation Plan element that includes goals and policies relating to historic, cultural and archaeological sites within the City of Tacoma. The first Historic Preservation Element was adopted in 2006, and it was further expanded into a chapter in 2011.

The existing document is divided into several components, including

1. Administration – describes the operational structure of the historic preservation program
2. Identification – the survey and documentation of sites that may have historical or cultural significance
3. Management – the policies and tools for protecting important sites
4. Incentives and benefits – the means to encourage investment in historic properties either through direct financial benefits, or regulatory relief such as exceptions to certain building code or zoning provisions
5. Education – tools to build familiarity and awareness of historic and cultural sites
6. Advocacy – the promotion of policies and partnerships that support the mission and goals of the historic preservation program

The stated vision for historic preservation in the existing Historic Preservation Element include:

1. Historic resources are integral to the City’s overall goals and objectives.
2. Historic resources convey the humanity of Tacoma.
3. Historic resources are key to the City’s sustainability initiatives.
4. A network of individuals and organizations supports historic preservation throughout the community.
5. Historic Preservation is “horizontally integrated” into planning efforts.
6. The City’s historic preservation program is readily accessible.
7. Historic preservation looks forward while valuing the past.
8. Historic preservation is solution oriented.
9. The preservation program guides treatment of historic resources.

Why does this matter?

Tacoma is a rapidly growing and changing city, with heavy demands on its existing form, including available housing. Many new residents from across the region and the country

are arriving every year. At the same time, Tacoma is an older city by northwest standards, with a high number of intact historic resources still standing, and communities that care deeply about their histories and how these are manifested and enhanced by the built environment. Likewise, the land on which Tacoma was established has always been home to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, who still reside and work in this region, and whose cultural imprints upon the land remain both above and below the ground, including sites of great cultural, historical and archaeological significance. As Tacoma grows and develops, the Historic Preservation Comprehensive Plan Element provides guidance for the development of tools, regulations and incentives to ensure that future development is balanced with the protection and enhancement of important cultural and historic sites, increases awareness of our shared histories, provides access to history and knowledge of Tacoma's past, and encourages sustainable development through adaptive reuse and architectural salvage and deconstruction. The Historic Preservation Element is about the future Tacoma, as much or more as it is about the past.

The City of Tacoma has had a historic preservation program since 1973. Like other cities, historic preservation as a policy area has roots in the environmental movement, and in many ways grew as a response to concerns over loss of community identity and sense of place resulting from urban renewal. In Tacoma, this began with historic designations of well-known landmarks such as Old City Hall and Union Station (1974), the Carnegie Library (Main Branch), First Presbyterian Church, Holy Rosary Church, Northern Pacific Headquarters, Pantages Theater, Stadium High School and Seymour Conservatory, and others (1975). In 1978, Old City Hall was the first local historic district established, followed by the Union Depot Warehouse Historic District (1983), the North Slope Historic District (1994), and the Wedge Neighborhood Historic District (2011). Today, there are 190 individually listed City Landmarks, and 4 locally listed historic districts.

Similarly, there are many properties and districts listed on the Washington State Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places. In Tacoma, all of the locally listed historic districts are also on the National Register of Historic Places, and there are several that are listed on the National Register but not local, including Stadium Seminary National Historic District (1977), South J Street National Historic District (1986), Buckley's Addition National Historic District (2016) and College Park National Historic District (2017).

There have been several proposals for the creation of additional local historic districts that have not been successfully implemented. These include Old Town (most recently proposed in 2010), West Slope Conservation District (2016), and College Park (2021-22). The Pacific Avenue Historic District, between S 13th and S 15th, was removed from the historic register and demolished in 1986, leaving the Luzon as its sole building until it too was demolished in 2009.

The public policy benefits of historic preservation are well documented, but some benefits include:

- Historic buildings can be part of a built environment that retains a sense of uniqueness and identity, and can serve to encourage historical awareness and understanding.

- Historic preservation is an economic multiplier; existing buildings that are repurposed attract investment not only into the structures themselves, but also attract heritage tourism. In Tacoma alone, historic renovations have resulted in \$308 million in capital investments from private projects, not including public sector projects such as the UW-Tacoma Campus and Union Station Federal Courthouse.
- Historic rehabilitation is also a sustainable development strategy particularly for cities with a large stock of older buildings, including for the development of housing. In Tacoma \$174 million has been invested into 45 historic renovations with multifamily units.

As with many land use and planning tools, there are current challenges to overcome in historic preservation policies and regulations. Historic designation affects what individuals may do with their properties and has been perceived as a barrier to investment and development; like zoning and other land use tools, historic preservation can be misused to achieve other aims or be at odds with other policy priorities.

Additionally, the benefits of historic preservation have not been equitably distributed geographically or demographically. As a small program area with limited resources, the historic preservation program has long relied on citizen and community advocacy for historic nominations, for example, which contributes to an outcome that is largely dependent on community capacity and desire. Similarly, the nomination process and the design review requirements associated with historic preservation is a barrier that has not yet been addressed in a broad, systematic manner.

Proposed Amendments

Structure

- Remove as a program element in book 2 and make into a full element of the comprehensive plan
- Connect Historic Preservation to equitable growth, neighborhood change, and addressing cultural needs of existing and new residents, particularly for the Black community and other underrepresented groups.
- Remove redundancy and siloed policies that have related policies elsewhere in the plan (design development, for example)
- Improve treatment of Tribal concerns
- Incorporate recommendations for code updates anticipated in 2025

Policy Framework

Growth Management Act Goals and Policies (RCW 36.70A)

The Historic Preservation Element is consistent with the Growth Management Act by providing policy guidance for the following:

1. Identification of significant lands, sites, and structures that have historic or archaeological significance through survey and documentation, and review for development impacts on historic and culturally significant sites.

Encourage the preservation of significant sites through the historic nomination and designation process, the use of preservation tools and incentives, and design review

Per RCW and WAC statute, a comprehensive plan is not required to have an historic preservation element. However, GMA clearly recognizes the importance of historic and cultural resources as, alongside goals for promoting urban growth, reducing sprawl and protection the environment, it includes the following preservation goal as one of the 15 overarching goals of GMA:

(13) **Historic preservation.** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.

VISION 2050

The Multicounty Planning policies (VISION 2050) provide direction for a coordinated approach and consistency within local Comprehensive Plans that supports and helps execute the regional growth strategy.

The regional growth strategy focuses growth in designated centers and near transit stations to create healthy, equitable, vibrant communities well served by infrastructure and services. The strategy supports rural and resource lands as vital parts of the region that retain important cultural, economic, environmental, and rural lifestyle opportunities over the long-term.

VISION 2050 also offers guidance related to land use and development patterns. It the further development of healthy, walkable, compact, and equitable transit-oriented communities that maintain unique character and local culture. This includes conserving rural areas and creating and preserving open space and natural areas.

Policies and programs should:

Regional Growth Strategy	
Development Patterns	Policy Reference
<p>GOAL: The region creates healthy, walkable, compact, and equitable transit-oriented communities that maintain unique character and local culture, while conserving rural areas and creating and preserving open space and natural areas</p>	
<p>Preserve significant regional historic, visual, and cultural resources, including public views, landmarks, archaeological sites, historic and cultural landscapes, and areas of special character.</p>	MPP-DP-6
<p>Support urban design, historic preservation, and arts to enhance quality of life, support local culture, improve the natural and human-made environments, promote health and well-being, contribute to a prosperous economy, and increase the region’s resiliency in adapting to changes or adverse events.</p>	MPP-DP-9

Addressing Priority Outcomes

In the first phase of the comprehensive planning process, the project team identified key outcomes that assess a baseline of wellbeing across a community. The 19 selected outcomes reflect the key themes for this plan update: equity, public health, sustainability, opportunity, and safety. Outcomes were evaluated geographically, comparing results across eight Tacoma neighborhoods. The **Historic Preservation** element broadly addresses these outcomes.

- Historic Preservation, including thematic representation, distribution of landmarks and districts.** The Tacoma Register of Historic Places identifies individual properties with ethnic and cultural historical representation, yet further work is needed to expand the ethnic and cultural groups represented to more accurately cover Tacoma’s history. An analysis of distribution of Historic Districts and Landmarks across Tacoma found disparities in the number of registered places relative to the cultural resources inventoried, particularly in the Eastside. While a completely balanced geographic distribution of resources is not anticipated, Historic Preservation policies can lead to a more equitable city by ensuring that registered places are considering the value of sites significant to a broader range of community groups in Tacoma.

To a lesser extent, Historic Preservation connects with a second project outcome, most closely linked with the City's Arts and Cultural Vitality Division. Although this outcome is managed by a department that is organizationally independent of the Historic Preservation Program and not represented in the Historic Preservation Element, it nonetheless is a measure of access to cultural and historic programs across the city.

- 2. Cultural Vitality, including level of access to arts, culture, heritage programs.**
The Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan identified Arts and Cultural Vitality as one of seven key areas to promote equity and opportunity, especially for youth, in the city. The Community Survey shows varying levels of satisfaction with access to arts and culture by racial categories with Black residents feeling the least satisfied. Historic Preservation policies can help support equitable access to arts and cultural experiences by focusing on preserving and expanding programs in BIPOC communities.

Community Input

The Project Team compiled qualitative data from nine community visioning workshops and categorized it into overarching themes representing community priorities for Tacoma's growth over the next 25 years. Additionally, the Project Team reviewed community input gathered through previous engagement activities that occurred between 2016 to present day in the Tacoma Existing Engagement Gap Analysis report.

Historic preservation was a focus of the Comprehensive Plan engagement through community workshops across each neighborhood and the online "Ideas Wall". Residents were asked to choose historic places to preserve and whether they felt their community's history is reflected or preserved in their neighborhood or across Tacoma. Overall, community members want to preserve places that are meaningful to them to showcase the diversity of Tacoma's cultural legacy and history of the land. Specific responses varied by neighborhood, and included:

- Residents in the West End are lacking a sense of place and do not feel that there are enough locally recognized historic places and landmarks.
- In Central Tacoma, community members shared that there are several sites important to the Black community in Hilltop that should be considered for preservation efforts.
- Some residents of the South End, South Tacoma, and Eastside noted the wish to preserve culturally diverse community spaces and businesses like B&I Public Marketplace. Community members also noted the difficulty and inaccessibility of the Historic Landmarks and District nomination process leading to less diverse representation in the City's designated historic places.

10 Historic Preservation

HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

- **GOAL HP-1** Tacoma is a livable community with a strong sense of history. Innovative policies and procedures build upon a depth of knowledge about the history of Tacoma and its residents
- **GOAL HP-2** Preservation efforts support Tacoma as a sustainable community and help the City meet its climate goals
- **GOAL HP-3** Historic resources are integral features of the public realm. Historic properties are well managed and maintained
- **GOAL HP-4** Historic review processes are efficient, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission operates in a transparent manner
- **GOAL HP-5** The preservation ordinance and other related codes are clear, easy to interpret, and they reflect the goals of the preservation program
- **GOAL HP-6** Incentives and benefits support appropriate rehabilitation and continued use of historic resources
- **GOAL HP-7** The preservation of Indigenous history and significant sites are prioritized in Tacoma's historic preservation program
- **GOAL HP-8** Historic Preservation initiatives originate from community organization advocacy. The Department communicates clearly with implementation groups and fosters positive relationships with community partners
- **GOAL HP-9** Tacoma's Historic Preservation Program fosters equitable growth and anti-displacement efforts
- **GOAL HP-10** The Historic Preservation program protects more places of significance to underrepresented communities

Historic Preservation

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10.1 Introductory Context

What is this chapter about?

Preservation means having properties and places of diverse historic and cultural value in active use and accommodating appropriate improvements to sustain their viability while maintaining the key character-defining features which contribute to their significance as cultural resources. In addition, preservation means keeping cultural resources intact for the benefit of future generations.

The Historic Preservation chapter defines the City of Tacoma's preservation goals, policies, and actions for preservation and neighborhood conservation. It also provides a framework for other groups and organizations engaged in community-based initiatives with interests in protecting and experiencing cultural resources.

The chapter's primary goal is the equitable preservation and active use of cultural resources. This goal supports the city's vision: "Every Tacoma resident is a safe and short walk, roll, bus, train, or bike ride away from amenities, such as groceries, schools, parks, and healthcare" and significantly contributes to the focus areas of equity, opportunity, safety, health, and sustainability.

Book I: Core Policy Elements

- 1 Introduction + Vision
- 2 Growth Strategy
- 3 Complete Neighborhoods
- 4 Environment + Watershed Health
- 5 Housing
- 6 Transportation
- 7 Economic Development
- 8 Parks + Recreation
- 9 Public Facilities + Services
- 10 Historic Preservation**
- 11 Engagement + Administration

Contents

- 10.1 Introductory Context
- 10.2 Goals + Policies
- 10.3 Priority Actions



The Hiroshimaya Hotel

Source: <https://tacomahistory.live/2019/10/16/the-hiroshimaya/>

Why is this important?

Tacoma is a rapidly growing and changing city, with heavy demands on its existing form, including available housing. Many new residents from across the region and the country are arriving every year. At the same time, Tacoma is an older city by northwest standards, with a high number of intact historic resources still standing, and communities that care deeply about how their histories are manifested and enhanced by the built environment. Likewise, the land on which Tacoma was established has always been home to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, who still reside and work in this region, and whose cultural imprints upon the land remain both above and below the ground, including sites of great cultural, historical, and archaeological significance. As Tacoma grows and develops, the Historic Preservation Comprehensive Plan Element provides guidance for the development of tools, regulations, and incentives to ensure that future development is balanced with the protection and enhancement of important cultural and historic sites, increases awareness of our shared histories, provides access to history and knowledge of Tacoma's past, and encourages sustainable development through adaptive reuse and architectural salvage and deconstruction. The Historic Preservation Element is about the future Tacoma, as much or more as it is about the past.

Development pressure and deferred maintenance can threaten the preservation of historic resources. Some properties are altered in ways that diminish their integrity. Others face potential demolition, sometimes for redevelopment and sometimes because of extensive deterioration. The historic resources that are formally recognized as individual landmarks and as contributors to historic districts are better maintained and protected from redevelopment. Other sites and artifacts remain to be identified as having historic significance and still others, while known to be of historic value, have not been formally designated. Identification and designation of historic resources helps tell the story of Tacoma for present and future generations.

Tacoma has a well-established preservation and award-winning program, which enjoys broad support by its community. It is recognized as a key ingredient in community well-being and livability. The City of Tacoma has had a historic preservation program since 1973. Like other cities, historic preservation as a policy area has roots



in the environmental movement, and in many ways grew as a response to concerns over loss of community identity and sense of place resulting from urban renewal. In Tacoma, this began with historic designations of well-known landmarks such as Old City Hall and Union Station (1974), the Carnegie Library (Main Branch), First Presbyterian Church, Holy Rosary Church, Northern Pacific Headquarters, Pantages Theater, Stadium High School and Seymour Conservatory, and others (1975). In 1978, Old City Hall was the first local historic district established, followed by the Union Depot Warehouse Historic District (1983) which is surrounded by the Union Station Conservation District, the North Slope Historic District (1994), and the Wedge Neighborhood Historic District (2011) surrounded by the Wedge Conservation District. Today, there are 190 individually listed City Landmarks, and 4 locally listed historic districts.

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The public policy benefits of historic preservation are well documented, but some benefits include:

- ▶ Historic buildings can be part of a built environment that retains a sense of uniqueness and identity and can serve to encourage historical awareness and understanding.
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Union Station

<https://tacomahistory.live/2016/02/17/union-station-there-and-back/>

\$308 million in capital investments from private projects, not including public sector projects such as the UW-Tacoma Campus and Union Station Federal Courthouse.

- ▶ Historic rehabilitation is also a sustainable development strategy particularly for cities with a large stock of older buildings, including for the development of housing. In Tacoma \$174 million has been invested into 45 historic renovations with multifamily units.

There are current challenges to overcome in historic preservation policies and regulations. Historic designation affects what individuals may do with their properties and has been perceived as a barrier to investment and development. Like zoning and other land use tools, historic preservation can be misused to achieve other aims or be at odds with other policy priorities.

Additionally, the benefits of historic preservation have not been equitably distributed geographically or demographically. As a small program area with limited resources, the historic preservation program has long relied on resident and community advocacy for historic nominations, for example, which contributes to an outcome that is largely dependent on community capacity and desire. Similarly, the nomination process and the design review requirements associated with historic preservation are barriers that have not yet been addressed in a broad, systematic manner.

The intent of the goals and policies in this element is to begin to address these and other issues.

What we heard

Historic Preservation was a key topic addressed during One Tacoma visioning engagement, which included eight in-person workshops and an online discussion board. Workshop attendees were asked questions such as which historic place they would choose to preserve in their neighborhood, the criteria that should be used to choose historic places, and whether they felt like their community's history was well reflected in spaces throughout Tacoma.

Comments on the online Ideas Wall that had strong support included the City being more proactive in advocating for the preservation of existing buildings with policies to ensure demolition is sensitive to preservation and sustainability concerns. A more proactive stance would also include prioritizing preservation in communities under high redevelopment pressure such as McKinley Hill, South Tacoma, and Lincoln. Others suggested making the application and designation process more accessible for neighborhoods and demographic groups that have not historically submitted applications.

At the workshops, South Tacoma and Eastside community members were vocal about historic preservation. Many comments mentioned the importance of places like specific churches with religious significance, and other buildings, businesses, and places. These communities were enthusiastic about seeing their community's history reflected in historical sites and the potential to reflect the cultural diversity of the area.

How does this chapter address key themes?

Preserving historic places, including landmarks and neighborhoods, helps maintain a connection to the community's heritage and identity. These intangible connections



“[To me, the historic places are] the Hilltop churches, Hilltop history center in the new Hilltop library, Caballeros Club strongly supported as a legacy Black institution in the Hilltop.”

– CENTRAL TACOMA
COMMUNITY MEMBER

can have profound impacts on a sense of belonging in a neighborhood, opportunities to build social capital, and a sense of wellbeing (Orthel, 2022). Historic preservation evokes this sense of belonging when communities are meaningfully included and validated in the narrative of what is preserved. However, these tools can also have the opposite outcome for groups that are excluded from the historic narrative or when misused to promote self-interest. Tacoma’s historic preservation approach must be mindful of its BIPOC communities and the diverse stories that deserve celebration, recognition, and preservation in the community. (Equal Justice Initiative, 2020; Peña-Martinez, 2023). **(Equity and Health)**

The economic benefits of protecting local historic districts are well documented across the nation, and in Washington. These include higher property values, job creation in rehabilitation industries, and increased heritage tourism. However, as mentioned above, inequitable implementation can also result in exclusionary economic outcomes. A focus of this chapter is equity in distribution of investments in historic preservation which creates opportunities for all to engage with heritage and enjoy the associated economic benefits. **(Equity and Opportunity)**.

Historic preservation is also an important tool against decay and neglect in older buildings. At times, the condition may deteriorate so much that the building becomes a safety hazard and/or a threat to public health. With appropriate incentives and supports, these buildings can be maintained before they deteriorate. Tools for safe demolition and salvage are also important features of the Historic Preservation program that support community health. **(Safety and Health)**

Sensitive stewardship of the existing building stock significantly reduces environmental impacts. Re-using a building also preserves the energy and resources invested in its construction, avoids landfill impacts, and reduces the need to produce new construction materials. Historic neighborhoods are often some of the more compact and walkable areas in a city, having been built before more car-centric urban design. Preserving elements of these areas and integrating them with modern transportation modes can be a very efficient means of achieving neighborhood walkability, pedestrian safety and connectivity and making progress toward climate goals. **(Sustainability)**



EQUITY



OPPORTUNITY



PUBLIC HEALTH



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



What are some baseline conditions and opportunities?

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN TACOMA TODAY: PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Administration: The framework for operating the preservation program.

Effective administration is a critical part of a successful preservation program. It includes overall organization, the roles of various City departments, staffing, and the procedures that work to assure effective operation of the preservation program.

A successful preservation program requires ongoing administrative support and commitment by the City. The overall administration of this plan is through the Community and Economic Development Department, but interdepartmental cooperation is essential to achieve its goals and objectives.

Best practices for administering a preservation program include providing sufficient staff, maintaining a well-managed Landmarks Preservation Commission, and providing convenient access to information or inventory needed by property owners and other users. Review processes should be efficient as well, making best use of time for all participants.

Identification: The survey and recognition of properties and sites with cultural or historic significance.

A first step in preservation is to determine which properties have significance as cultural resources. The City employs a variety of research tools to assist in making those determinations. These tools include summaries of historical patterns, defined as “contexts” and “themes,” along with descriptions of the typical property types and building styles associated with them. Archaeological investigation can help identify cultural resources. The City’s Geographic Information System (GIS) has also emerged as an important tool for identifying potentially significant resources. GIS resources may not be accessible or ideal for all communities. Web and library resources, and oral histories, are also important tools. Historic resources should be presented in a manner that helps people understand their significance and interpret their association with the community. Surveys should cover all key areas of the city, and the information should be up to date. Historic contexts should help serve as a basis for planning, in terms of predicting where historic resources are likely to be found, and in setting priorities for historic surveys.

Ongoing surveys include:

- ▶ Mixed use center surveys of South Tacoma, Lincoln, McKinley, and Proctor
- ▶ Black History Survey

Management Tools: The specific mechanisms for protecting historic resources.

Management tools are the mechanisms for protecting historic resources and providing technical assistance. Tacoma's primary tools are the ordinances that guide historic preservation efforts as well as underlying zoning regulations, the design review process, and design guidelines that manage treatment of the city's historic resources. These provide an effective framework for preservation. In some cases, however, individual tools lack sufficient clarity, or they conflict with others. A diverse assortment of preservation tools should serve Tacoma's needs. These should be based on national standards of best practices, and at the same time should be tailored to Tacoma. Examples of management tools include:

- ▶ Design review
- ▶ Cultural resources and demolition review (downtown + mall subareas)

Incentives and Benefits: Programs that assist property owners and support preservation.

Effective preservation programs offer special benefits to stimulate investment in historic properties, encourage owners to follow appropriate rehabilitation procedures, and assist those with limited budgets. This includes:

- ▶ Regulatory relief, such as code exemptions and development standards departures
- ▶ Currently subject of study
- ▶ Financial or technical assistance, such as Special Tax Valuation, Historic Tax Credits
- ▶ Tax or regulatory relief, such as streamlined review
- ▶ Special flexibility in building codes

Incentives and benefits for preserving historic properties should attract investment in and rehabilitation of historic properties and support local employment.

Education: The tools to build awareness and strengthen skills to support preservation.

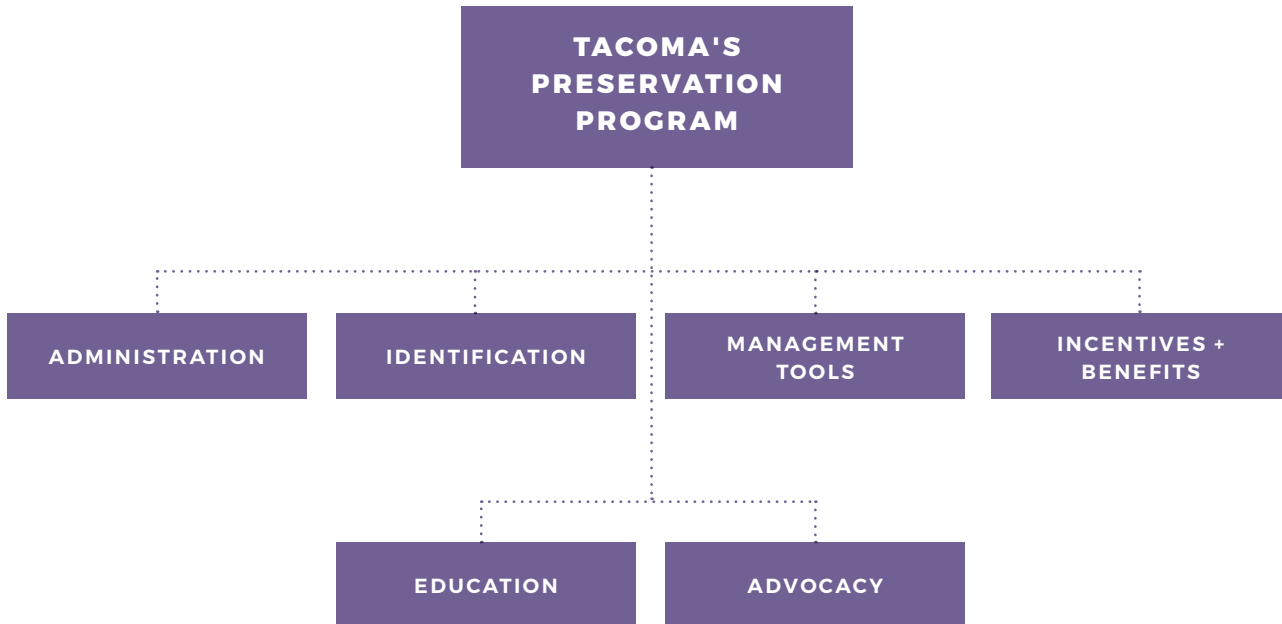
Helping property owners and building industry professionals learn how to maintain historic properties as active viable assets is a key part of a successful preservation program. Many property owners willingly comply with appropriate rehabilitation procedures and develop compatible designs for new construction when they are well informed about preservation objectives. Workshops that build an understanding of historic significance by providing helpful information about rehabilitation techniques and publications are examples of education and outreach strategies. Well-written design guidelines that provide useful information can also serve an educational role. Education should take a more prominent role in preservation to build the constituency for historic preservation. Helping property owners learn how to maintain their historic properties as active, viable assets is key to a successful preservation program. Educational activities can also benefit general contractors, designers, and workers, increasing their skills and suitability for historic projects. Education and outreach are key functions of partner organizations, and non-profit groups that promote preservation and history.

- ▶ Examples of ongoing events: annual events calendar, preservation month

Advocacy: The promotion of policies and partnerships that support preservation.

Advocacy programs promote policies and plans that support historic preservation. This includes lobbying for zoning codes that are compatible with traditional development patterns in older neighborhoods and supporting the creation of new incentives to maintain historic structures. They also work to expand the base of preservation players and engage partners in collaborative preservation programs. Community members and non-profit organizations lead preservation advocacy in Tacoma. While the City’s historic preservation office will act as coordinator, advocacy efforts should be shared across a broad base of independent community organizations and City departments. Community organizations should be the primary advocates for historic preservation in Tacoma with the City’s preservation office providing support.

- ▶ Examples: work with the Black History Project, annual awards program



Historic Resources

THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT IN TACOMA

The historic preservation movement in Tacoma began in the late-1950s when post war neglect and Federal Housing and Urban Development programs threatened one of the Pacific Northwest's oldest and most intact downtowns. The construction of Interstate 5 in the early 1960s put older parts of the city in increased competition with outlying areas. In response, many older buildings were replaced in an attempt to modernize and redevelop the center of the city.

In the 1970s, the local arts community, led by architects Robert Evans and Alan Liddle, began a push for policy changes that would preserve the Old City Hall district and encourage preservation of older buildings elsewhere in the city. The City Council adopted Tacoma's first Landmark Preservation Ordinance in July 1976. Soon after, in 1978, the Old City Hall Historic District was designated as the City's first design review district. In 1983, the City Council designated a second downtown district, the Union Depot/Warehouse Historic District, followed in 1985 by the Pacific Avenue Historic District.

EXISTING LANDMARKS AND DISTRICTS

In many parts of the city, entire neighborhoods maintain their historic character and provide places to live today while retaining a sense of the past. Other older neighborhoods with traditional building patterns also contribute to the sense of place that is Tacoma, even though they may not have historic significance. These areas, both residential and commercial, enhance the city's quality of life. Many historic resources are formally recognized as individual landmarks and as contributors to historic districts. Others remain to be identified as having historic significance, and still others, while known to be of historic value, have not been formally designated. Over the years, there have been numerous surveys both citywide and targeted towards certain planning objectives or initiatives. Most of the survey data is available from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation WISAARD database, and most survey reports are also available at the Tacoma Public Library NW Room. Historic surveys have included the following:

- 1977-1982, Citywide Community Cultural Resources survey
- 1994 Hilltop
- 2003 CBD and Port
- 2003 North Slope
- 2004 Hilltop (again)
- 2005 South Tacoma and South End
- 2007 West Slope
- 2008 Religious Properties
- 2008 West Slope
- 2008 Wedge
- 2010 Predictive Model
- 2018 Proctor MUC
- 2019 McKinley MUC
- 2021 Lincoln MUC
- 2023 S Tacoma MUC
- 2023 Underrepresented Communities Black History Survey

Many of Tacoma's historic resources are officially recognized in national, state, and local historic registers. Additional historic resources exist but have not yet been identified or formally listed. Depending on the type of designation, historic listing may provide opportunities for specific preservation incentives and specific protections for listed properties. Tacoma recognizes historic resources as individual landmarks or as contributors to its historic districts. Other properties of value to the city's heritage may also be identified in its conservation districts. The current status of these types of designations is summarized below.

LOCALLY DESIGNATED TACOMA INDIVIDUAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Tacoma's Register of Historic Places lists over 130 individual historic landmarks throughout the city. Individual landmark buildings represent a range of historic themes, resource types, and architectural styles. Over 30,000 properties in the city have structures that are over 50 years old and could potentially be eligible as historic landmarks. An expanded understanding of existing historic themes and resource types will be necessary to inform an ongoing historic survey process. This process will help determine which of the many potentially eligible properties should be prioritized for designation as local historic landmarks.

LOCALLY DESIGNATED TACOMA HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Historic districts are areas of the city that have been determined to possess special character, related development patterns, of an environment specific to a period of time.

Tacoma has nine historic districts, including four that are listed on the local Tacoma Register (TR), eight that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR), and eight that are listed on the Washington Heritage Register (WR):

- ▶ Buckley's Addition Historic District
- ▶ College Park Historic District
- ▶ North Slope Historic District
- ▶ Old City Hall Historic District
- ▶ Salmon Beach Historic District
- ▶ Stadium-Seminary Historic District
- ▶ South J Street Historic District
- ▶ Union Depot/Warehouse Historic District and Union Station Conservation District
- ▶ Wedge Neighborhood Historic and Conservation Districts

All but one of these nine districts (Salmon Beach) are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

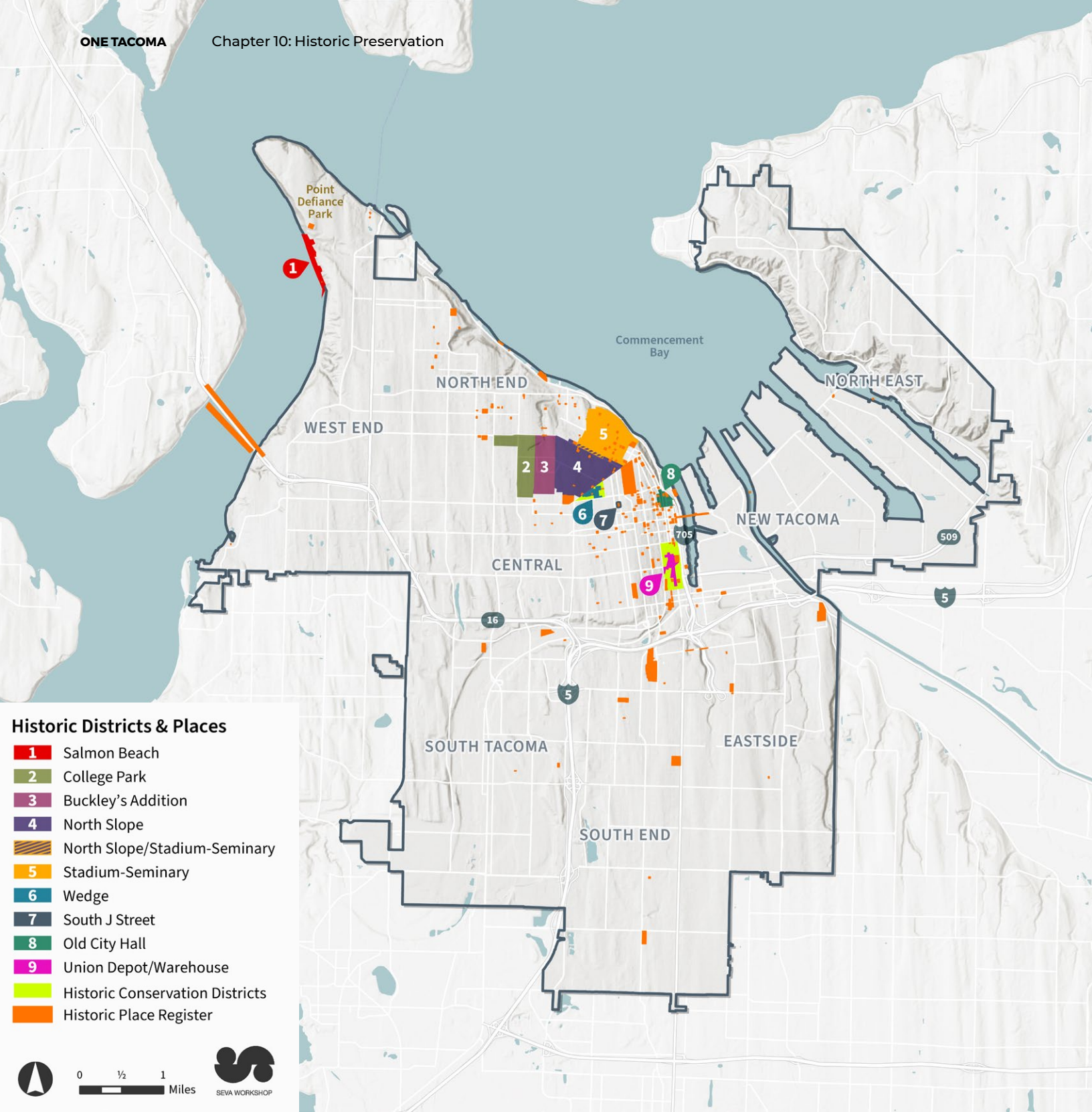


Exhibit 92. Historic Districts and Places Map.

Sources: City of Tacoma, 2023; Seva Workshop, 2024.

LOCALLY DESIGNATED TACOMA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

In addition to local historic special review districts, the City of Tacoma has also designated two local conservation districts – Union Station Conservation District and the Wedge Neighborhood Historic and Conservation District.

UNION STATION CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Union Station Conservation District is a locally designated conservation district surrounding the Union Depot/Warehouse Historic District. The district is intended to act as a buffer and ensure that adjacent development is compatible with the character of the Union Depot/Warehouse Historic District.

WEDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The Wedge Neighborhood Conservation District is a locally designated conservation district, known for its well-preserved early 20th-century residential architecture and historical significance. The conservation district is a buffer zone around the core historic district. Located near Wright Park, the district is shaped like a wedge, hence its name. It features a mix of Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Queen Anne-style homes, many built between 1890 and 1930. The district reflects Tacoma's growth during its early industrial and railroad expansion periods.

STATE AND NATIONALLY DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In addition to the North Slope, Old City Hall, Union Depot/ Warehouse, and Wedge Neighborhood Historic Districts, Tacoma has four historic districts that are not locally designated but have either state or national designation: Buckley's Addition Historic District, Salmon Beach Historic District, Stadium-Seminary Historic District, South J Street Historic District (managed as individually landmarked buildings on the local register, not as an overlay district).

All the districts described in this chapter enjoy recognition of their historic significance. A variety of incentives and benefits are available to properties at all levels of historic designation. Tacoma's locally designated historic landmarks and districts are also subject to special protection, such as design review and permitting.

While historic resources are valued, many factors challenge their preservation. Some properties may be altered in ways that diminish their integrity. Others may be under pressure for demolition, sometimes for redevelopment and sometimes because of extensive deterioration. These challenges exist in part because some people may not value their properties as historic resources. Others are not aware of the significance of their buildings or lack the means to maintain them. In some cases, other objectives may appear to conflict with preservation. Responding to these factors in strategic ways is key to an effective preservation program.

Equity in Historic Preservation

Equity issues in historic districts are also complex and multidimensional. Historic districts can provide access to grants, tax incentives, and funding for homeowners to preserve their properties. These incentives can help maintain the character of neighborhoods and stabilize property values, benefiting those who can access these programs. Higher income property owners who have the means to take advantage of incentives may inadvertently profit from the district designation. Renters and residents with lower incomes frequently do not immediately directly benefit since they might not have the funds or know-how to apply for preservation tax subsidies or credits. This can exacerbate socioeconomic disparities because of the unequal distribution of preservation benefits. Available incentives may encourage production of housing in historic buildings, especially where larger single family residential buildings are divided into multiple units. The extent to which these incentives are used depends on the development environment and property owners.

Historic districts often preserve culturally significant buildings, monuments, and places, which can help maintain the cultural heritage and identity of a community. This can be particularly important for communities of color and immigrant populations whose histories and cultures have historically been overlooked or undervalued. In some instances, a neighborhood's historic classification may prioritize the preservation of some aspects of its past while neglecting others. For instance, the cultural contributions of African American, Latino, or Indigenous groups could be overlooked if the historic district favors European architectural designs and established Euro-American historical narratives. These can be systemic issues that flow from national policies. The National Park Service (N.P.S.) set national policies for surveying historic and archeological sites, protecting significant properties, and erecting historical markers. Many biases were written into the criteria that determine how sites are selected. For example, one of the criteria for preservation is architectural significance, which meant that modest buildings were long excluded from consideration. Historic resources outside of districts may have less support and access to institutional knowledge about accessing resources that can disadvantage them in the preservation process.

While land use changes are based on the underlying zoning, historic district regulations can restrict certain types of development, such as large-scale commercial projects or high-rise buildings, which could disrupt the neighborhood's character. This protection can preserve the aesthetic qualities that residents value.

Preservation regulations can add to the cost of homebuilding. In a city like Tacoma where housing affordability is a key challenge, stringent regulations may make it cost prohibitive for moderate- or low-income households to live in historic districts. Preservation regulations may make it more difficult to construct new homes or alter existing properties to provide affordable housing options in neighborhoods with high housing demand. This could reduce the availability of housing and possibly exacerbate housing issues, especially for those with lower incomes.

The process of creating and managing historic districts can involve community engagement, which offers an opportunity for residents to advocate for their neighborhoods and ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed. It can help empower communities to shape their own futures. The historic designation decision-making process itself may not be inclusive, and some groups may be excluded. The opinions of renters, residents of color, and others with lower incomes may not be as well-represented in discussions about historic preservation, which could lead to policies that do not fully reflect their goals and interests.

Historic districts can stimulate local economies by attracting tourists, supporting small businesses, and creating jobs in restoration, salvage, adaptive reuse and preservation work. These benefits can contribute to economic growth in the area. However, the influx of tourism and upscale businesses can lead to displacement or make it unaffordable for local residents. Property owners and businesses that can capitalize on the historic status may experience financial benefits, while those who are unable to adapt may suffer.

Historic districts often come with public funding and programs that can assist with building maintenance and preservation efforts. These resources can benefit historically underfunded communities. However, some residents may not be aware of these resources, or they may lack the capacity to navigate the bureaucratic processes required to access funding. The technical knowledge required for restoration and preservation may also be out of reach for those with fewer educational or financial resources.

While challenges will continue, this is a particularly exciting time of opportunity for preservation in Tacoma, as well as nationally. There is an increasing understanding of the roles that preservation and neighborhood conservation can play in equity, sustainability, and how they complement many other community development objectives.

Historic preservation and housing affordability and diversity can work hand in hand. Conversions of homes within historic districts into multifamily units happen today. Zoning before 1950 allowed for a greater diversity of housing types and forms, and preservation requirements which reflect Tacoma's historic development patterns can encourage a greater range of housing types affordable to households across the income spectrum. For example, housing pressure and legislation in the WWII era resulted in the subdivision of many single-family homes in the city into multiplexes, and surviving multiplexes are not uncommon today in historic districts, providing more affordable options for residents.

New partnerships are forming in which a variety of groups promote historic resources in their work programs. New technologies also are emerging that will make it easier to identify historic resources, distribute information about their proper stewardship, and facilitate appropriate management.

10.2 Goals and Policies

GOAL HP-1: Tacoma is a livable community with a strong sense of history. Innovative policies and procedures build upon a depth of knowledge about the history of Tacoma and its residents.

Policy HP-1.1: Ensure the availability of a comprehensive, citywide inventory of Tacoma's cultural and historic resources.

Policy HP-1.2: Encourage community planning efforts to integrate citywide historic resources to ensure a holistic understanding of a neighborhood's context and history, connect preservation to community dialogue, and strengthen the link between community planning and historic preservation.

Policy HP-1.3: Work with existing neighborhood planning efforts that incorporate community engagement to identify historic preservation priorities, including nominations.

Policy HP-1.4: Provide tools to educate the community about Tacoma's history and historic resources, focusing on areas and populations currently underrepresented in the Tacoma register.

Policy HP-1.5: When the City is considering historic preservation code amendments and program enhancements, ensure the Historic Preservation program has capacity commensurate with the scale of need and community interest in preserving them.

GOAL HP-2: Preservation efforts support Tacoma as a sustainable community and help the City meet its climate goals.

Policy HP-2.1: Promote preservation's role in community sustainability efforts, such as land conservation, retaining embodied energy, and reduced demolition waste.

Policy HP-2.2: Include sustainability objectives when updating the City's historic design guidelines. Ensure design guidelines do not preclude updates like solar panels, sustainable materials or other retrofits that increase sustainability. Facilitate conservation of resources by supporting and encouraging architectural salvage, deconstruction and relocation to preserve embedded energy resources.

Policy HP-2.3: Reduce barriers to adaptive reuse. Pursue code relief or similar measures that actively encourage reuse of older structures by reducing costs and reviews.

Policy HP-2.4: Partner with utility providers on programs to financially support energy retrofits in older single- and multi-family buildings.

GOAL HP-3: Historic resources are integral features of the public realm. Historic properties are well managed and maintained.

Policy HP-3.1: Partner with the City's urban designers to ensure that public realm designs integrate historic significance and recognize historic places.

Policy HP-3.2: Oversee the ongoing maintenance of historic facilities to provide a high-quality experience for visitors.

Policy HP-3.3: Connect historic facilities to the urban fabric, specifically tailored to their site and neighborhood.

GOAL HP-4: Historic review processes are efficient, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission operates in a transparent manner.

Policy HP-4.1: Maintain a certified historic preservation program. Complete the Annual Certified Local Government (CLG) reporting on time each year.

Policy HP-4.2: Promote collaboration among the LPC and City departments, boards and commissions.

Policy HP-4.3: Create communication materials in diverse and accessible formats to educate residents, property owners, business owners, community groups and developers on available preservation programs, tools, and incentives. Coordinate materials across departments to ensure that the community can understand how to combine incentives and programs.

Policy HP-4.4: Ensure that outcomes/impacts for historical review processes are clear and aligned with citywide priorities.

Policy HP-4.5: Seek ways to reduce barriers and impacts to historic district residents, that can meet the public benefit goals of both historic preservation and access and inclusion, such as reduced or simplified review requirements.

GOAL HP-5: The preservation ordinance and other related codes are clear, easy to interpret, and they reflect the goals of the preservation program.

Policy HP-5.1: Ensure Landmarks and Historic Special Review Districts Code reflect current preservation policies and goals.

Policy HP-5.2: Streamline project review and enforcement to promote preservation objectives.

Policy HP-5.3: Establish clear categories for resource designation.

Policy HP-5.4: Schedule designation of historic resources according to clearly defined priorities.

Policy HP-5.5: Adapt the Historic Preservation program to ensure that social and cultural significance is prioritized within the nomination process.

Policy HP-5.6: Expand enforcement tools to ensure regulations are having the desired impact.

Policy HP-5.7: Develop pre-approved templates and streamlined permitting for infill development (such as ADUs and DADUs) and single- to multi-family conversion in Historic Districts that aligns with guidelines and promotes affordable long-term housing.

Policy HP-5.8: Support home relocations both within and between properties when this facilitates conservation of significant structures and provision of more housing capacity.

GOAL HP-6: Incentives and benefits support appropriate rehabilitation and continued use of historic resources.

Policy HP-6.1: Offer financial incentives that stimulate investment in historic properties, emphasizing programs focused on low-income homeowners and naturally occurring affordable housing throughout the city.

Policy HP-6.2: Enhance regulatory incentives to encourage preservation and conservation, especially for categories of preservation identified as currently underrepresented in the inventory.

Policy HP-6.3: Expand technical assistance programs to reduce barriers to preservation and conservation pathways for those unfamiliar with the process.

Policy HP-6.4: Provide clear and effective demolition review procedures to improve cultural resource protections, assess significance from a district standpoint, and clearly identify mitigation procedures.

Policy HP-6.5: Provide tools and funding to address preservation emergencies.

Policy HP-6.6: Provide incentives to protect historic resources from demolition and expand enforcement tools for greater efficacy.

Policy HP-6.7: Encourage collaborations with economic development and marketing that can bring attention and investments to historic properties.

Policy HP-6.8: Allow hardship exemptions in historic districts to allow low-income residents to use alternative, more affordable options in place of specified historic materials and designs.

GOAL HP-7: The preservation of Indigenous history and significant sites are prioritized in Tacoma's historic preservation program.

Policy HP-7.1: Develop a clear, consistent citywide cultural resources review framework to improve permitting practices.

Policy HP-7.2: Develop regulatory framework to assess and avoids or mitigates impacts to cultural resources, including elements of the cultural landscape like ceremonial grounds, or other sites, as part of Tacoma's rich history.

Policy HP-7.3: Develop regulations in partnership with tribal entities to protect archaeological and cultural resources and understand specific areas of interest and concern.

GOAL HP-8: Historic Preservation initiatives originate from community organization advocacy. The Department communicates clearly with implementation groups and fosters positive relationships with community partners.

Policy HP-8.1: Support existing community partnerships for historic preservation.

Policy HP-8.2: Foster new partnerships with community groups representative of the city's diversity to build interest in historic preservation and expand access to its benefits.

Policy HP-8.3: Establish preservation training programs and web-based tools geared toward property owners and construction trades.

Policy HP-8.4: Maintain interdepartmental dialogue to cultivate a strong understanding of the Historic Preservation program, correct application of its initiatives, and opportunities for collaboration.

Policy HP-8.5: Partner with community organizations, historical societies, the Northwest Room, and local educational institutions to proactively highlight historically significant events, people, themes, and eras currently underrepresented in the Register to encourage community research initiative and nomination.

GOAL HP-9: Tacoma's Historic Preservation Program fosters equitable growth and anti-displacement efforts.

Policy HP-9.1: Reduce the administrative burden of permitting that adds costs to affordable housing developments within historic districts.

Policy HP-9.2: Update Design Guidelines to encourage housing in historic districts.

Policy HP-9.3: Ensure the designation of local historic districts complements the intent of the base zoning.

Policy HP-9.4: Create and scale up programs and interventions that allow preservation to play a role in mitigating cultural displacement and strengthening cultural heritage in communities of color.

Policy HP-9.5: Support the adaptive reuse of historic structures into needed uses such as housing, community space, or other neighborhood-serving functions.

Policy HP-9.6: Support small, locally driven projects that seek to use the Historic Tax Credits or other incentives for historic structures.

Policy HP-9.7: Discourage the unnecessary demolition of older viable structures through a range of methods that lead to adaptive reuse, even if they are not designated as historic.

Policy HP-9.8: Encourage deconstruction practices, including updating permitting requirements and material reuse standards.

Policy HP-9.9: Put in place more robust ways to preserve and celebrate places and features of historic significance outside historic districts.

Policy HP-9.10: Consider establishing a community land trust focused on investment in rehabilitation and preservation of historic residences at affordable prices, especially in neighborhoods with high rates of disrepair.

GOAL HP-10: The Historic Preservation program protects more places of significance to underrepresented communities.

Policy HP-10.1: Evaluate and update local criteria for architectural integrity, survey and assessment practices, and methods of defining eligible district boundaries to ensure they do not perpetuate exclusion of Black heritage.

Policy HP-10.2: Explore approaches to preservation that address historic erasure and empower heritage protection in the city's Black communities.

Policy HP-10.3: Partner with community-based organizations in neighborhoods with historically less access to preservation resources to increase awareness of existing programs and to design new programs that meet their preservation interests and needs.

Policy HP-10.4: Ensure surveys and context statements specifically address historic displacement of, exclusion of, and disinvestment in underrepresented communities.

Policy HP-10.5: Create a commemorative/cultural site register for sites that are not buildings or may not warrant regulatory review.

Policy HP-10.6: Support and encourage city programs for fine-grained relational work with community to identify historic places and stories.

Policy HP-10.7: Partner with community-based organizations working on historical documentation and advocacy.

10.3 Priority Actions

ACTION	LEAD
Update the code to prioritize historic preservation initiatives derived from the neighborhood planning process.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Create, maintain and make widely accessible a comprehensive, citywide inventory of Tacoma's cultural and historic resources	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Create a set of inclusive cultural context statements which establish a background for understanding Tacoma's historic resources and tell a full story of the city's history.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Update the code for historic district designation process to a) clarify the respective roles of Planning and Landmarks Commissions, and City Council, and b) align the process with other similar land use policy reviews.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Review and update the fees for design review for properties on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, including those within locally designated historic districts and individual City Landmarks, particularly if the value to the City is appropriately balanced with the impact to community members.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
For historic district nominations, where appropriate, amend the regulatory requirements for the nominations process to include Tacoma's Tribal history.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Streamline and clarify cultural resources review.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Integrate probability mapping from the Puyallup of Tribe of Indians Comprehensive Land Use Plan into the City's code to improve and strengthen cultural resources review.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Develop regulations that encourage new development on vacant or underutilized spaces and reuse of existing structures. Reduce code barriers including building code, energy code, change of use thresholds and seismic.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services

ACTION	LEAD
Seek resources for a proactive survey program for the identification, documentation and preservation of historically and culturally significant buildings in all areas of the City, prioritizing historically underserved and underrepresented areas.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Expand current demolition review code language to protect structures of historical or cultural significance outside of current historic districts. Streamline demolition review to address observed issues with the current process and to incorporate director’s rules.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Identify areas for improvement for historic preservation incentives, including support for state level amendments to the Special Tax Valuation Program that improve its accessibility and relevance, and are aligned with housing objectives.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Explore partnerships with housing developers focused on converting underutilized historic commercial or institutional structures to affordable housing, leveraging low-income housing tax credits paired with historic tax credits.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Create criteria and consideration for significance for sites under 50 years of age.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Create a commemorative historic register for sites of community significance for which traditional historic designation may not meet community needs.	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services
Develop historic plaque program in coordination with community historic groups	Historic Preservation Program, Planning and Development Services