

City Building Permits and Historic Preservation in the North Slope

by Roger Johnson

As the North Slope Historic District representative to the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission, I have been aware of a problem in the NSHD that perhaps needs some clarification. The City of Tacoma has a building code to ensure safety and consistency in systems and engineering. Whenever a residence is being altered, a permit is usually needed. There are exceptions but these are few. Call the permit desk at 591-5030 and tell them what you are considering, and they will get you started.

In the North Slope Historic District, we have another set of guidelines that apply to the exterior of our homes. These guidelines help us make decisions on changes to the exterior without losing or significantly altering the historic features and character of our homes. These guidelines are the compass that keep the ever-changing NSHD from drifting too far from the unique, diverse, vibrant and historic area that we all enjoy now.

There are many examples in Tacoma where a fine historic home or area was altered, and in just a few years it had lost the features that made it special. Our guidelines keep us focused. Once you have applied for your permit there is one more step to actually getting it - your plan is reviewed by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission. The process is very simple. Fill out a form, get some pictures and drawings of your project, and discuss your plans with the commission. It will work with you to make them happen within the historic guidelines. Once your plans are approved by the LP C your permit will be issued.