



Trolley Times

North Slope Historic District Inc. Feb. 2022
501(c)(3) Organization Volume 101

Tacoma Council Passes Land Use Changes

By Deborah Cade, NSHD, Inc. Chair and Zoning Committee Member

The City Council approved land use changes known as "Home in Tacoma," which eliminate single family zoning. The North Slope is already a mixed residential neighborhood, so this change to the city comprehensive plan and the zoning changes that will follow it may impact us less than

family housing, which is reflected in our "historic mixed residential" zoning category.

However, significant portions of the historic district have been newly-designated as "**mid-scale**," which could include larger (up to four stories) apartment buildings. The plan originally

designated nearly half of the district as mid-scale. Changes before council passage reduce that area, but still designated 119 individual parcels as mid-scale. These are mostly along North I Street and North 3rd St.

Phase Two of "Home in Tacoma" involves development of zoning regulations and addressing the commitments made in the adoption of the comprehensive plan changes.

One of these commitments obtained by our now former councilmember Robert Thoms was *to ensure that we have zoning and standards that are consistent with the policies of historic areas,*

including NSHD.

More general commitments include development of design standards and avoidance of demolition of historic structures and displacement of residents.

More specifically, we want to work with the planning staff and Council to **change the designation of the residential areas in NSHD that are newly named "mid-scale."**



other currently single-family neighborhoods.

However, there are areas of this plan change that will need serious attention as the City continues with changes to residential zoning.

Generally, the "Home in Tacoma" plan designates some neighborhoods as "**low-scale**," which includes single family homes as well as duplexes, tri-plexes, and smaller multi-family. Most of the North Slope is now designated as low-scale. Since our neighborhood predates zoning regulations, it already consists of a mix of single family and multi-

Continued on page 2

LOOKING BACK 20 YEARS

City Building Permits and Historic Preservation in the North Slope Historic District
From "Trolley Times," Jan 2002, by Roger Johnson

As a representative on 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 keeps 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 city 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. The Commission will work with you to make your plans happen within the historic guidelines. Once your plans are approved by the LPC, your City permit will be issued.



From the Editor: Believe it or not, the same rules still apply for getting a permit - 20 years later.

Continued from page 1 **Land Use Changes**

This neighborhood is densely built already, and the City often holds it up as a "model" for other neighborhoods. If that is so, then the district should all be designated as low-scale and protected from future redevelopment efforts. The historic district guidelines already greatly limit the possibility of demolition, so there should be no reason to include these parcels as mid-scale.

The NSHD is a mix of residential housing types and styles that reflects:

- the various eras in which houses and apartments were constructed,
- makes beneficial use of inner-city residential property,
- and provides choices in housing sizes and types.

It's unfortunate that more neighborhoods weren't built the same way.

We want to keep this housing mix, and we hope to be able to work productively with the planning department and the Council to develop zoning regulations that are consistent with preserving the historic neighborhood.

For more information on Home in Tacoma, see the City's website at <https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pagelid=180033>.

When you park your car in Tacoma...

By Eric Huseby, Parking Services Manager, City of Tacoma

Parking Enforcement is one of three groups within the City that provide parking enforcement services throughout the City, with the others being Road Use Compliance (primarily for abandoned autos) and the Tacoma Police Department.

Our team plays an important role in making sure that drivers are following the various laws meant to keep our community safe. Our group has the primary responsibility for parking enforcement downtown, in business districts and by complaint within residential neighborhoods Citywide.

Did you know that it is illegal to park within...

...**30 feet** of a stop sign

... **20 feet** of a crosswalk

...**15 feet** of a fire hydrant

...**5 feet** of a driveway (you shouldn't block driveways either)

It's also important not to park on the planting strip (area between the sidewalk and curb line) or park against traffic.

Obedying the above regulations greatly enhances the safety of all our residents!

If you ever have a parking issue that you would like to report, there are several ways to reach us.

1. You can go old school and give us a call at 253.591.5095.

2. If it's easier, shoot us a quick e.mail at parking@cityoftacoma.org.

3. For the more tech savvy of us, you can provide feedback via our **TacomaFIRST 311 mobile app** available for both Apple and Android devices.

4. Just bend our ear when you see us out and about and let us know how we are doing, ask a question or just say "hi."

To start the new year off right and avoid bad parking behaviors, we thought it might be a good idea to share with you some often overlooked parking regulations that are meant to keep you and your neighbors safe.

Eric Huseby
Parking Services Manager
City of Tacoma--PW Engineering
253.591.5437

Keep Plants Low for Visibility

Tacoma's Traffic Dept. reminds us to keep plants in planting strips **low in height at corners** - the measured height should be **no more than 2 feet**. It is easy to block visibility for drivers and pedestrians as they approach our many unguarded intersections.

Tacoma's "Right-of-Way Landscape Standards" says: "Near intersections & driveways, vegetation & raised beds must **not exceed 2 feet in height.** "

Such control of plant height increases safety for pedestrians and cars. As Traffic Engineer Jennifer Kammerzell said in a previous *Trolley* article: "...this improves visibility and provides a "window" to see people or cars, whether walking or driving."

So, get out the clippers and snip off the tops of those corner plants!

Winter Pruning Is Good for Deciduous Trees and Shrubs

By Angie Clark, WSU Master Gardener, Emeritus

In Ed Hume's (first edition) Gardening book he says that winter is an excellent time to prune many of our deciduous (lost their leaves) shrubs and trees including fruit, flower and shade trees which are dormant.

He states that "pruning is quite simple providing you use good common sense." "Don't just do it for the sake of pruning," he suggests, as many of our trees and shrubs can grow for years without needing pruning.

When getting ready to prune have the proper tools ready before you begin. Hand pruners for small branches, a pruning saw or lopping shears for medium to large-sized branches and pole pruners for high branches.

The late winter/early spring bloomers like forsythia, clematis, quince and spirea, should be pruned after blooming. Note: roses should not be pruned until

mid to late March. The initial pruning of any plant should include the removal of any dead or diseased branches, being sure to cut back to healthy live wood at an outside bud. This forces the new growth up and out. *Always clean the tools with alcohol or bleach to prevent passing of diseases and the cut pieces should be trashed and NOT recycled.*

Then all weak, rubbing and crossing branches can be removed to open up the plant to more air and light. When pruning fruit trees, at least 1/3 to 1/2 of last year's growth should be removed, leaving 1-2 new branches to develop into strong limbs to bear the new fruit.

For more specific pruning help check this WSU Master Gardener site: s3.wp.wsu.edu or "Cass Turnbull's Guide to Pruning" or the American Horticultural Society's "Guide to Pruning and Training."

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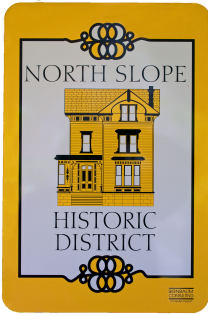
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THREE TYPES OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS IN NSHD

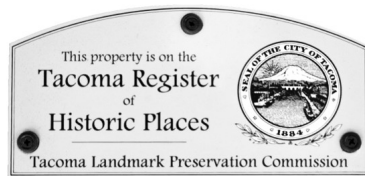
There are three types of historic districts in North Slope Historic District: the City District, the

Washington Heritage Register and the National Register. The North Slope Historic District is listed on three registers. Historic districts are places that have been determined to possess special character, and related development patterns that convey the architecture of certain areas during specific periods of time.



Tacoma City Register

On the City level, historic districts are listed on the Historic Register through a nomination process. Nominations to the Register must be approved by the Landmarks Commission and then referred to the Planning Commission for additional review if the nomination is for an historic district. It is the Planning Commission that recommends to the City Council that the historic district be formed. The North Slope Historic District did this three times, once for the formation of the original North J. St. district, and two more times for the two expansions.



The overlay for the NSHD grants protections by implementing a design review process requiring Landmarks Commission approval of changes to the exterior of a property - and for demolition of it. Further protection for NSHD was acquired by changing the zoning to HMR-SRD, a single-family zoning category promoted by NSHD, Inc.

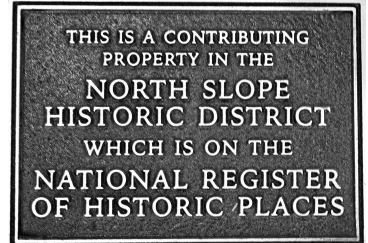
Washington Heritage Register

Areas that are listed on the Washington State Heritage Register must be nominated and approved by the Governor's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The NSHD was nominated, approved

and put on the register in 2003. Listing on the state level grants no protections and makes no restrictions.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Park Service is the keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. The States help the NPS with the review process, and in our state it is done by the Department of Archeological and Historic Places.



Nominations, like the one for the NSHD, are first reviewed on the state level and then forwarded to the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for review. Listing on the National Register of Historic Places is *an honor for outstanding properties and districts, but grants no protections and makes no restrictions*



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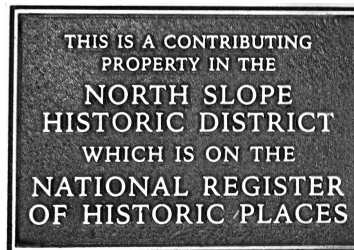
TacomaNorthSlope.org the NSHD web page

TROLLEY TIMES. The NSHD newsletter, published Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. The current edition can always be found at: <https://goo.gl/5sdbHq>

North Slope NEWS. Sign up on NSHD web page, and have items of general NSHD news, events, and the online *Trolley Times* sent to you.

Send your questions, comments and remarks to news@TacomaNorthSlope.org

FOR SALE - NSHD PRONZE PLAQUE



Want a Plaque for Your House?

If you would like a bronze plaque to mark your house as part of the NSHD National Register of Historic Places, the NSHD, Inc. Board has them for sale.

Plaques are 5 x 7 and cost \$90.00 each.

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Lean, Clean and Green Landscaping

(Part 2) by Geoff Corso

{Part 1 was in Nov. 2021 issue of the *Trolley Times*}

We increase the risk of a landscape fire when we neglect to remove dead plant material including whole plants, branches and leaves. As the August, 2021 Windemere newsletter reminds us, you can reduce the risk of firebrands jumping from the landscaping to your house by removing dead plant from gutters and installing mesh screens over exterior vents.

For information about fire-resistant landscape design guidelines and plants, the Pacific Northwest Extension service published a 48-page publication in 2006 titled "*Fire Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes: Selecting plants that may reduce your risk of wildfire.*" You can find a copy of it on the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Web site at https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_fire_resistantplants_in_nw.pdf.

The publication has a long list of plants with photos. For more information about reducing the risk of fire damage through landscape maintenance, DNR also publishes a flyer titled "Fire Prevention: Defend your Home from Wildfire" that you can find at https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_fireprev_home_combo.pdf

The Chelan and Douglas County Master Gardener Program of the Washington State Cooperative Extension service published a 75-page booklet in 2017 titled "*Fire Resistant Plants for Chelan and Douglas County Washington: A step-by-step guide to choosing the right plant for the right place.*" The people who live in these counties have more experience defending their homes from landscape fires than we do, and they share their expertise in this booklet. While the booklet provides a long list of fire-resistant plants that grow well in their climate, you may be surprised to find that many of the plants grow well here too. In

addition, you'll find fire-resistant landscape design guidelines and a long "further reading" list. You can find the booklet at <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2086/2018/01/fireresistantplants2017.pdf>.

A transcript of the August 18th, 2021 KUOW program "*Seattle Now: Your garden might be a fire hazard*" can be found at <https://www.kuow.org/stories/seattle-now-your-garden-might-be-a-fire-hazard>. In a conversational format, landscape design, plant selection and yard maintenance are debated.

Finally, Rachel Abrams has clearly spent many hours researching landscape design and maintenance through the lens of reducing the risk of fire in an urban, residential environment and has synthesized the information in her "*LawnLove Blog: Fire-Resistant Landscaping Ideas for Seattle.*" You can find it at <https://lawnlove.com/blog/fire-resistant-landscaping-seattle/>.

The common theme running through these publications is to create a defensible space around your home by removing highly combustible materials from your yard, incorporating more hardscaping (e.g., stone and brick walls, patios and paths, gravel mulch, etc.) around your house, and installing fire-resistant plants.

In short, keep it lean, clean and green.

"Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact."

John Kenneth Galbraith

FROM THE ARCHIVES . . .

Taken from National Register of Historic Places



711 NORTH L STREET C. 1977

Chelsea Apartments, 1922: The apartments are listed in old permits as estimated to cost, \$15,000. However, a later article states that "The Chelsea" Apartments, 711 North L Street, were completed by George W. Cheetham, builder and owner, at a cost of approximately \$25,000. Seven apartments of four rooms each are individually supplemented with dressing rooms, tile bath, electric range and fireplace..."

George Cheetham, the builder, was a resident of Tacoma, beginning in 1902. Between 1912 and 1914 he constructed 70 homes, and was at this time barely over thirty years old. An article states that, "Although not an architect, nor having ever taken a course in architecture, Mr. Cheetham draws his own building plans with precision and the craftsmanship of an experienced architect..."

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