



Trolley Times

North Slope Historic District Inc. August 2023
YOUR HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD Volume 107

August Meeting to Feature Historic Preservation

On **August 24th**, North Slope Historic District, Inc. will have a General Meeting, with invited guests Susan Johnson, the City's Coordinator of Historic Preservation, and Michael Sullivan, Tacoma's eminent local historian, to talk about what's new in historic preservation for Tacoma and for Washington. Historic districts are in the news these days, and all of us need information, whether for old districts such as ours, or for people who would like to establish a new historic neighborhood.

Ms. Johnson has an impressive array of historic preservation accomplishments, having worked previously in numerous capacities in historic preservation, providing coordination and technical support to preservation efforts. She has a Master's Degree in Historic Preservation and has also worked at Artifacts Consulting as an architectural historian.

Mr. Sullivan has been the principal at Artifacts Consulting, Inc., a Tacoma-based historic and architectural preservation studio started in 1997. He is the past president of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, as well as

on a board of advisors to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Washington in Tacoma, where he teaches a popular class in the history of the City of Tacoma.

We welcome both of our guests and look forward to the information and enjoyment they can give us.

Aug. 24th Immanuel Presbyterian Church
901 N J St. Enter on N 9th St.
Social begins at 6:30, Program at 7 pm

National Night Out Is Nearly Here!

National Night Out is on **August 1** this year, so get ready to gather with your neighbors to set up your Block Watch group or celebrate the one you have. National Night Out is meant to foster relationships with close neighbors so that all can have someone to call on in an emergency because you *know* your neighbors. Have a cook-out, or a dessert pot-luck and select a chair who can collect phone/text numbers and distribute to all. Make plans to act on any problems you have in the neighborhood.

So, get a Block Party together and meet your neighbors. You need each other!

1. Invite the neighbors in your block, asking them to bring something for a potluck (a dessert potluck is easiest), and decide where to have it. Just use someone's front or back yard.
2. Eat, chat, share contact info and talk about any problems you'd like to work on. Choose a chairperson and decide if you want to use emails or phones.
3. Call Board Member Julie Turner (253-383-2329) for more information.

Home in Tacoma Goals Still Unclear to Many

By Roger Johnson

There have been many briefings about "Home in Tacoma" but the conclusion about the real goals and impacts are still not clear. I assume that the goal is to channel population growth to already existing neighborhoods with no real effort to provide housing for low income earners. Increasing density along with the resulting number of cars carries a responsibility to provide reliable, frequent public transportation with dedicated lanes to the entire city. Without public transportation in dedicated lanes the roadways have been a nightmare of heavy traffic and large parking lots (a waste of prime real estate).

In the 1970s, Amsterdam was at the same point Tacoma is today - wide streets full of cars, and housing shortages. They had the foresight to change. Car traffic was diverted to new streets away from downtown and residential neighborhoods. The car-centric neighborhoods were infilled with buildings housing multiple families and retail on bottom floors.

Along with the reimagining of neighborhoods, many forms of public transportation and dedicated bike lanes, and smart traffic controls made the streets much more friendly to pedestrians. It is now easier to take public trams or bike across town than to drive. When public transportation is easier and quicker than driving a private car, public transportation will be successful. The neighborhood retail spaces can be all kinds of stores and services, from clothing stores to small grocery stores to doctors and hardware, etc. No need to drive to just buy a loaf of bread or get a haircut or new phone; it is all within walking distance.

A non-profit called Strong Towns (check out the web site) has conducted research, building by building, about the economic productivity and infrastructure costs of many cities all around the world. Comparing economic value to infrastructure costs (return on investment) for dozens of cities, S.T. found that single-family zoning was one of the

most expensive uses of land in terms of return on investment.

Big box stores and malls with huge parking lots were just as expensive per square foot. Large wide streets lined with stores surrounded by parking lots were found to have negative impacts on the economic health of city. The car-centric infrastructure does not produce enough income to even pay for its own upkeep.

In all the studies, without exception, walkable neighborhoods with local retail create significantly more *economic value* than any other areas - expenses per dollar of income. Walkable neighborhoods have many benefits: less air pollution, a little daily exercise and more peace and quiet.

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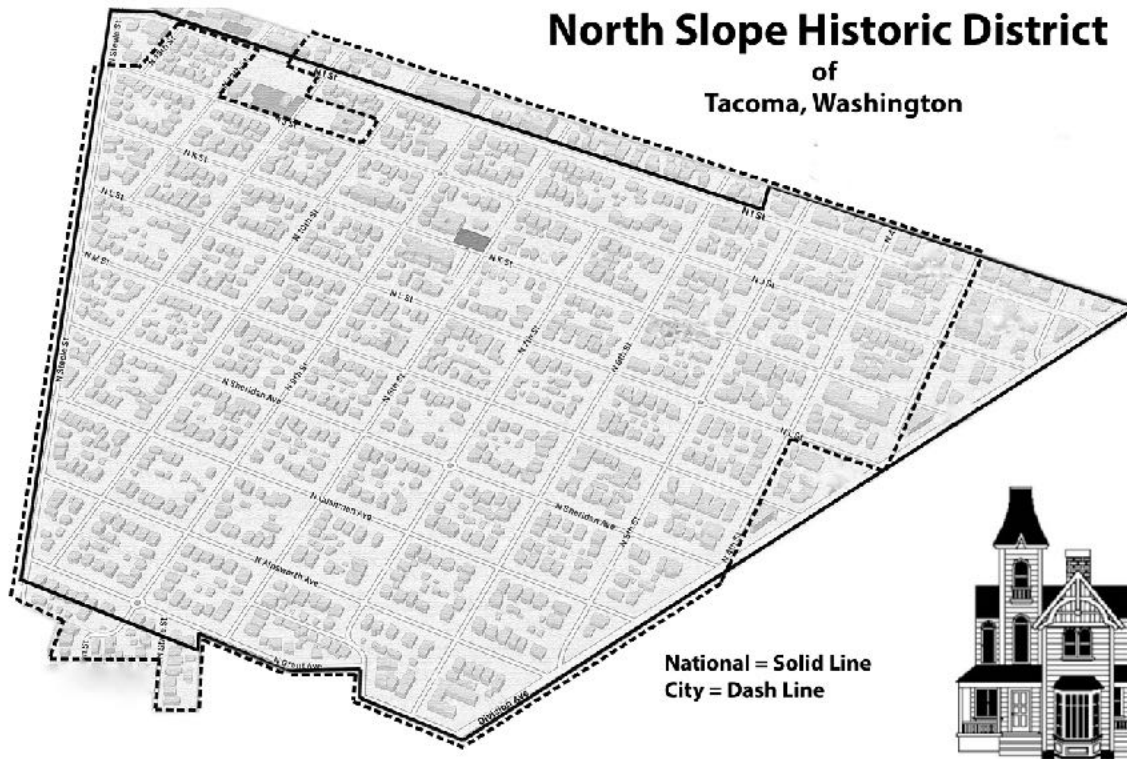
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NSHD BOUNDARY MAP

Thanks to Board Member Tom Giske, we now have a map of the two different North Slope Historic Districts. There are actually 3 districts, but the Washington Heritage Register boundary is the same as that of the National District and is not shown on his map.



Why are there different boundaries you may ask? The Tacoma City boundary came first. At the time of the creation of the NSHD, Tacoma City did not have a procedure in place for residential historic districts. It was up to the Historic Preservation Officer, the late Valerie Sivinski, and the City Attorney, to get the procedure in place. She was as anxious to get the procedure in place as were the owners and residents of the North Slope. Tacoma City council, at that time, recognized the importance of having residential historic districts and the NSHD procedure was implemented and the district formed. It was done in three stages and the event is well documented in the North Slope web pages.

The National Register of Historic Places registry is maintained by the National Park Service. Each state has the responsibility to monitor the National Registry properties and Washington State has the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) to do that monitoring. When the National boundary was being formed, DAHP requested that the NSHD boundary be along existing streets and join up to the districts that were already on the register. Steele Street, Division and Grant were 3 of the streets used; for the North side, the boundary was set to join the NSHD to the existing Stadium-Seminary National Historic District.

Being on the National Register of Historic Places brings honor to the NSHD. It is not easy to get this distinction and the district is lucky that so many historic homes still exist. The district was the largest residential district in our state when it was placed on the National Register and that too is unusual. The details of how the National District was formed is well documented in the North Slope web pages.

"Home in Tacoma" Update

By NSHD Chair Deborah Cade

The Home in Tacoma program is currently in "Phase 2," which includes development of new zoning regulations, design standards, and strategies to avoid displacement and increase housing affordability.

The city Planning Department has held several open houses at which updated information has been made available and citizen input is gathered. I attended the open houses in Northeast Tacoma and Proctor.

Home in Tacoma, and comparable state legislation, has been described as eliminating single family housing and allowing multifamily housing in all residential neighborhoods. However, not "all" residential neighborhoods will share this new development equally.

The City Council has designated many residential areas as "view sensitive districts" in which new construction is limited to no more than 20 feet in height (or 25 in some areas). Although multifamily will be allowed in these areas, there will be less financial incentive to build with the height limitations.

In addition, newer neighborhoods, particularly in suburban areas, often include restrictive covenants that limit development to single family housing only. Although these covenants are not enforced by the City, they may be enforced by neighbors or by home owner associations (HOAs), and would likely discourage developers.

How does this affect NSHD and other older Tacoma neighborhoods?

Implementation of Home in Tacoma is dependent on substantial redevelopment, which likely includes demolition of some existing housing. Since NSHD is a city historic district, it is much more difficult to get a demolition permit for a contributing structure. However, noncontributing structures, such as apartment buildings built in the 1960s or later, could be demolished and replaced with larger structures.

In addition, other than the Wedge and NSHD, no other older neighborhoods have this historic district designation and demolition protection.

In my opinion, this redevelopment will likely be focused on older inner city neighborhoods that lack restrictive covenants or view protection.

Why should we be concerned?

1. Replacement of older homes and apartment buildings can result in loss of more affordable housing and displacement of residents that may be unable to afford rent in newer buildings.
2. In addition, demolition of older structures results in the waste of older building materials that are no longer available, such as old growth fir and cedar.
3. More restrictions on the demolition of usable housing could help to alleviate the loss of more affordable housing and displacement of current residents, as well as make the program more sustainable.

What can you do?

1. Stay informed about the progress of the Home in Tacoma program. The City's Home in Tacoma webpage is regularly updated.
<https://cms.cityoftacoma.org/Planning/DevelopmentServices>
2. Search "city planning" and "home in Tacoma." Participate in the City's public information forums and opportunities for public comment.
3. Let our council member, Sarah Rumbaugh, know of your views and input. Call or write to her:
253-591-5100
srumbaugh@cityoftacoma.org



NSHD's National Register of Historic Places

Section 8, Statement of Significance, Part 1

Summary and editing by Julie Turner

Tacoma's North Slope Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A "as a cohesive neighborhood that represents the broad pattern of the social and economic history of Tacoma." As such, the district represents a cross culture of individuals, both famous and ordinary, whose skills and talents contributed to the development and growth of the city. The early residents included professionals, business proprietors, railroad employees, independent trade people, and celebrities, all living in a close-knit neighborhood.



Queen Anne

The district is also eligible under Criterion C as an "area that embodies the

distinctive characteristics of homes built in Tacoma from 1881 to 1955." Many of these dwellings represent the work of a master craftsman and/or architect, and a majority of the resources possess high artistic values representing significant characteristics of architectural styles popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Tudor

The homes in the North Slope Historic District are uniquely separated from surrounding

neighborhoods

by the street layout of the 1880s. The streets were laid out wide at Commencement Bay

and narrow at the south end of the District where N Grant Ave. runs between Division Ave and N Steele St.



Craftsman

While the district's homes are only a small part of Tacoma's rich historical treasure chest of historic homes, this area offers a high concentration of intact historic

resources.



Homesteader

The settlement pattern and building styles are a direct reflection of the periods of national economic growth and

stagnation as their dramatic fluctuations impacted Tacoma. Stylistic influences from the East Coast, Midwest, and California, combined with local vernacular styles and local materials created a unique appearance. The common influences and represented styles include *Queen Anne and Stick styles, the American Foursquare, the Craftsman, and California bungalow and Tudor*. Three waves of development, plus architectural and social trends, combined to



Foursquare

Continued on page 6

create a neighborhood reflecting local history, character and diversity.

As Tacoma's North Slope Historic District developed, buyers had many available lots to purchase. This wide range of choices gave rise to a checkerboard pattern of development.

Such a pattern is reflected today in the building styles and construction dates of the



houses throughout the area where the Queen Annes, Stick Styles and Foursquare homes are juxtaposed with Craftsman bungalows. The

buildings manifest the influence of locally available lumber and an eclectic Northwestern mixing of styles. These physical features are distinguishing characteristics of the homes in the District.

The period of significance for Tacoma's North Slope Historic District began in 1881, the date of the oldest still-standing houses in the District. By 1902, 25% of the houses in the District had been built. There were many additional homes added in the 1920s and by 1929, 78% of the homes had been built in the District. Building then became a slow steady process and by 1955, 89% of all homes had been built.

By the end of 1955, homes that fit the form and feel of the "older" homes stopped being built. It was in 1955 that the City of Tacoma changed the zoning laws, encouraging apartment houses to be built.

As a result, many historic homes in the district were destroyed in the name of progress and density.



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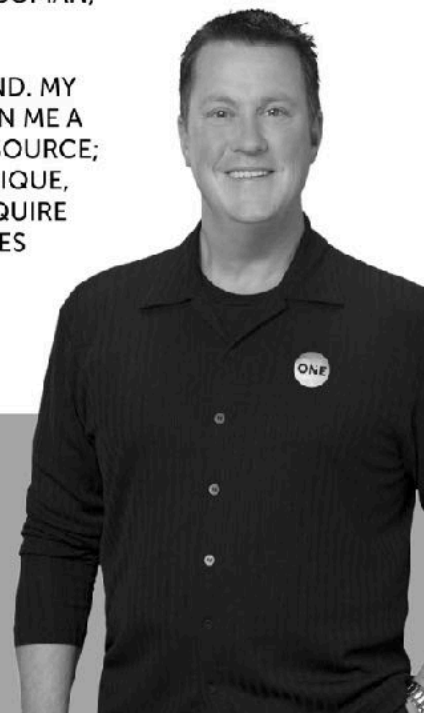
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FROM THE ARCHIVES . . .

Edited from the National Register of Historic Places

The house at 824 North M Street was built circa 1890 and was the home of Walter E. and Elizabeth F. Ligget. He was secretary of Washington Machinery Depot in 1904.

Walter Ligget was born in Brookfield, Mo. and attended local schools; he was first employed by the American Express Co. and "the old Hannibal, and St Joe Railroad." He married Elizabeth Flood in Missouri in 1896 and came to Tacoma two years later.

Walter held a variety of positions over the next 50 years, beginning as a bookkeeper for the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company, then as secretary of Menzies & Stevens (Clothiers), and as cashier at Pacific Mutual Door.

M. Porter Ligget, possibly a son, is listed as residing here in 1920, and a Ruth P. Ligget in 1924. Ligget was a charter member of the Orpheus Club, a Tacoma men's singing group, and served as treasurer of Tacoma Elks Lodge No. 174 for 41 terms.

The Liggets lived at this location for over 50 years. Original architect, builder and contractor unknown.



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