

NORTH K STREET LINE - WSHS 1895 Image

Trolley Times

North Slope Historic District Inc. Nov. 2025

YOUR HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD

Volume 116

Holiday Party and Tacoma Trivia at November Meeting

**Nov. 20 Immanuel Presbyterian Church
901 N J St. Enter on N 9th St.
Social begins at 6:30, Program at 7 pm**

Please join us for our annual holiday neighborhood meeting on Thursday, November 20, at Immanuel Presbyterian Church on North J Street and 9th. This meeting will feature sweet and savory treats provided by our NSHD board members and will be an opportunity to hear from and say thanks to our generous Trolley Times sponsors and our newsletter delivery volunteers. In addition, we'll play Tacoma Trivia with Debbie Freeman. Test your knowledge of Tacoma history against that of your friends and neighbors. Speaking of your neighbors, invite them to attend the meeting!

Also, consider bringing a donation of new socks, gloves, or hats for a collection to give to the Salvation Army. We collected a good number of these items last year, and they were greatly appreciated by the Salvation Army and the community that they serve.

Save The Dates 2025

November 4 – Election Day. Return your ballot by this date!

November 20 -- NSHD Holiday Party – Tacoma Trivia with Debbie Freeman

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City Council Enacting Significant Changes to Tacoma's Historic Preservation Code

By Marshall McClintock

It has not been a good two years for historic preservation in Tacoma. In 2024, the city passed its new zoning code that now allows construction of residential buildings up to five stories in some parts of the North Slope, reduces residential setbacks to five feet, and allows up to eight units per 25 by 150 foot lot. Remember how this was sold as "gentle" densification that would be sensitive to neighborhood patterns? The result was quite the opposite.

Then we had the historic district moratorium enacted by the Council in 2024. That was motivated by the false claim that many new historic districts were about to be proposed while historic preservation code updates were being developed, but in reality it was simply reaction against the College Park historic district nomination. (The Growth Management Hearings Board ruled that the moratorium violated the Growth Management Act, but the City was able to cure the defects found by the Board. The moratorium was put back in place last May and will expire in November 2025.)

This year brought the revision of the city code governing historic preservation (largely Tacoma Municipal Code sections 13.05.040 and 13.07). As I write this, City Council has just announced a public hearing on the new draft approved by the Planning Commission (PC). You'll likely get this article after Council's final vote, so I'll assume it will have approved what the PC proposed. Also, I'll discuss only those changes that would directly affect the North Slope Historic District (NSHD) rather than the entire revision. Remember also that in drafting this code revision, the city held no outreach meetings in the North Slope neighborhood generally or with the NSHD Board. In fact, the Landmarks Preservation Commission got to comment on the actual code language only once, and no written summary of its concerns was given to the Planning Commission.

The changes most likely to affect the NSHD involve attempts to restrict design review under the cover of "reducing" regulation in residential historic districts but oddly not in the commercial historic districts downtown. The first draft of the new code would have limited design review in residential historic districts to only those parts of buildings visible from the street right-of-way. It also exempted all changes to windows and cladding on "non-street facing elevations" from design review. The NSHD Board, Historic Tacoma, and North End Neighborhood Council as well as several individuals pointed out in public testimony that these proposed exceptions were vague, didn't protect important architectural features and even some primary facades not on the street-facing side of houses, and did not represent current

practice (as was claimed) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in its administrative review process.

Somewhat surprisingly, Planning Commissioner Brett Marlo offered an amendment to these two exemptions, which was unanimously accepted, that applied the exemptions only to those areas, windows, and cladding “not located on prominent facades or prominent parcels...” (TMC 13.05.040.D.2.c&d). “Prominent facades” are defined as “all building facades visible from waterways, public rights-of-way, or from any customer or client parking or pedestrian area...” as well as “facades which face the road(s) providing primary access to the building’s site.” (TMC 13.01.050). The Historic Preservation Office will determine whether an exemption applies or whether a permit application must go through design review.

This may not seem like much of a change, but it substantially reduces the availability of the two design review exemptions. First, a building can have multiple “prominent facades.” Second, it provides a more extensive “visibility” criterion, specifically including any public right-of-way or pedestrian area, which would include alleys. These exemptions are still worrisome but are more constrained in the Planning Commission version. Yet they still let the city give the appearance of reducing regulation.

Another addition to residential historic district design review criteria is worrisome due to its vagueness and possible weakening of design review. The added criterion is that a decision “shall give weight to the proposed project’s impact on the surrounding district...” (TMC.07.095.3). The problem with such a comparative criterion is that it’s difficult to see how any particular change to an individual contributing building in the district would affect the entire district. Depending on how LPC interprets this criterion, it could lead to a “death by a thousand cuts” scenario where over time incompatible changes accumulate to the point that a building or the entire district loses its historic integrity. How it is interpreted will need to be monitored carefully in the future.

Unlike previous years where city government supported historic preservation, the creation of new historic districts, and neighborhood civic involvement, today’s city officials seem to be positively opposed to such efforts.

Marshall is a former NSHD representative on the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Putting the Flower Garden to Bed for the Winter – Fall Cleanup Tips

By Deborah Cade

Days are getting shorter (a lot shorter!), leaves are turning and falling, and as much as I hate to admit it, summer is over and it’s time to do some fall yard cleanup. Here are my own tips that have worked in my flower garden over the years.

1. I deadhead my roses during the summer to encourage more blooms, but I stop mid-September. That allows the bush to develop rosehips and tells the plant that it's time to stop sending out new growth that will be vulnerable to cold weather and frost.
2. I deadhead everything else – dahlias, zinnias, other annuals – until the bitter end. When the zinnias are done, they go into the yard waste. I find that I have fewer problems with pests and plant diseases the following year if I remove the dead zinnia plants rather than leaving them until spring. However, if left in place, blooms that have gone to seed can provide food for birds.
3. Dahlias can be cut back to the ground when they are pretty close to dead; I leave them until late fall before cutting back to the ground. I then cover the bed with a light plastic sheet (like a lightweight plastic drop cloth) and secure that with a few rocks or bricks to keep it from blowing away. I read that tip on the Swan Island Dahlias website, and it's worked to allow the dahlia tubers to stay in the ground and not rot from too much moisture. If you have a lot of leaves or other mulch, you can cover the plastic with that. Our climate is mild enough to leave the tubers in the ground over the winter.
4. Consider leaving some areas of your yard not so "cleaned up." Leaves and other yard debris provide a place where pollinators and the bugs that feed our birds can grow. Less work too!
5. Some perennials can be left uncut until spring, such as chrysanthemums and coneflowers. Seeds provide food for the birds, and some pollinators nest in the hollow stems. I leave the mums and coneflowers until spring.

What works in your garden? What do you do to take care of your garden in the winter and early spring? If you have something to share in our February newsletter, email to dlcade@comcast.net. We have a lot of beautiful gardens and talented gardeners in this neighborhood, and we'd love to share how you care for your own gardens.

We're Updating the NSHD Website and Could Use Some Technical Help!

Several people have been working to update the NSHD website and make it more accessible and useable. But we could use some help! Specifically, we would like to find someone willing to manage the website and act as the webmaster. This will require some technical skills for managing a website, but will not require any production of content. Rather, it would just require posting documents, links, or other resources that are created by board members or other contributors.

We currently deliver the Trolley Times only to single family homes and some duplexes that are accessible to our delivery volunteers. We can't access locked apartment and condo buildings, and we actually can't afford to print that many more copies. Having an easily accessible website will enable us to post more information, including the current Trolley Times issues, and make it available to our neighbors in the apartment and condo buildings.

If you have website skills and would be willing to donate some time (not a lot) to this effort, please contact Geoff Corso at (206)334-5202.

Are You Interested in Serving on the NSHD Board of Directors?

Please come to the November meeting and talk to a board member about how you can help with neighborhood activities! Board members produce the quarterly Trolley Times, monitor changes that the City makes to zoning and historic preservation regulations that affect the neighborhood, maintain a contact with our Tacoma Police Department community liaison officers, organize neighborhood cleanups, and plan the quarterly neighborhood meeting programs. We've had a couple of board members move out of the neighborhood or otherwise be unable to continue on the board, and we could use more help! In addition to the activities listed here, we'd like to have one or more board members who can be more involved with posting neighborhood-related information on social media. If you're interested, please come to the November meeting and talk to some board members and see if it sounds like something you'd like to do. We'd love to have your help.

And if you've previously served on the Board and are still in the neighborhood, we'd like to have you back! Please come to the November meeting and talk to us!

Do You Have an Interesting Story About Your Historic Home?

Did some famous (or infamous) historic figure live in or visit your home? Is your house haunted? Did you find something interesting when doing a restoration project? If your house has a story, we'd like to hear it! Send it to dlcade@comcast.net.

Prevent Street Flooding -- Adopt A Storm Drain

It's that time of year when deciduous trees drop their leaves, and the rain carries some of those leaves to the city's storm sewer drains where they collect on the drain grill and sometimes cause street flooding. You can help reduce the risk of street flooding by volunteering to remove the leaves and litter from a storm drain grill near your home.

This year, the City of Tacoma Environmental Services Department is participating in the Washington State "Adopt A Storm Drain" program. To adopt a storm drain near you, go to <https://wa.adopt-a-drain.org/> where you can officially adopt your storm drain, name it, and document the amount of leaves, litter, and other debris you've removed from the storm water grill and the street around it. Of course, you can clean the leaves off nearby storm drains without registering too!

For concerns and questions, contact Josh Christy, City of Tacoma Sustainability Analyst, at jchristy@tacoma.gov, or call him at (253) 325-0067. And if your storm drain appears to be clogged, you can report it to the City's 311 system.

Immanuel Presbyterian to restore historic stained-glass windows

Immanuel Presbyterian Church, designed by noted Tacoma architect Ambrose J. Russell, was built in 1908 to replace the 1890 wooden church on the same site. It's particularly unique in that the congregation took the bold step of specifying the then-new Mission Revival style for its new building, making it Tacoma's only church in that style. In addition to its unique style, the original building had 22 stained and painted glass windows from Portland's Povey Brothers Studio (1888 – 1928), the largest and best-known art glass company in the Northwest. Long a contributing building within the North Slope Historic District, Immanuel was added last year as an individual landmark to the city's Register of Historic Places.

In 2026, Immanuel will have Scottish Stained Glass of Denver repair and restore these 118-year-old windows. They will be removed and shipped to Denver where they will be carefully cleaned, disassembled, restored, and reled. Since the windows will be gone for a while, you might want to stop by to see them before they leave for their restoration. Immanuel's "Jazz on J Street" every third Saturday from 7 – 9 PM is an excellent opportunity.

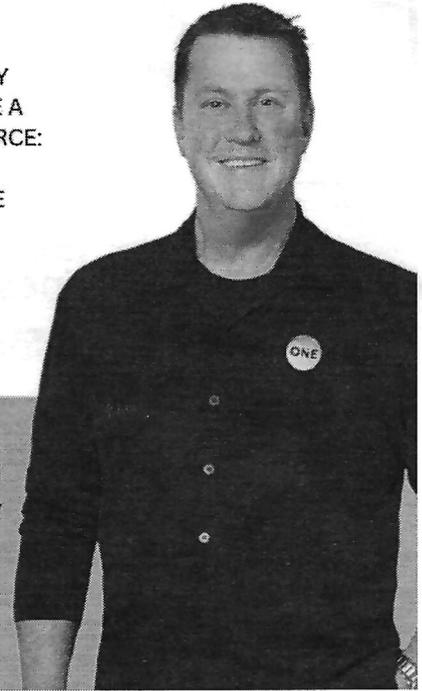
As you can imagine, this restoration is expensive. If you would like to help Immanuel with this project, you can make an online donation with your mobile device using this Zeffy QR code:



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HELLO NORTH END NEIGHBORS!

I'M CRAIG TUTTLE, BROKER ~ RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERT AT REALTY ONE GROUP TURN KEY. I'M A BORN AND RAISED TACOMAN, PASSIONATE ABOUT ALL THINGS LOCAL. FOR OVER 20 YEARS, TEAM TUTTLE, HAS HELPED BUYERS AND SELLERS ACROSS THE TACOMA, SPECIALIZING IN HISTORIC HOMES IN THE NORTH END. MY DECADES OF SUCCESS SERVING THE NORTH SLOPE HAVE GIVEN ME A PERSPECTIVE THAT IS UNBEATABLE. I'M YOUR REAL ESTATE RESOURCE: I KNOW THIS NEIGHBORHOOD AS ONLY A LOCAL CAN. THE UNIQUE, CHARMING AND DIVERSE PROPERTIES OF THE NORTH END REQUIRE AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOMES & OF THE CITY. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HOME. OR ARE BEEN CONSIDERING LISTING YOUR PROPERTY, TEAM TUTTLE IS HERE TO HELP! REACH OUT ANYTIME, FOR ALL YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS.



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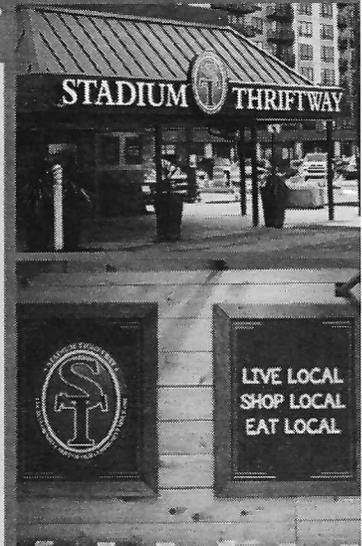
Locally owned and operated since 1983, Stadium Thriftway is located in the beautiful historic Stadium District of Tacoma. We offer a huge variety of delicious goods made by various local artists, cooks, and small businesses.

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You can also contact us at dlcade@comcast.net.