

Members

Mark McIntire, *Chair*
Ross Buffington, *Vice Chair*
Ken House
Imad Al Janabi, PhD.
Fred King
Megan Luce
Ha Pham
Pamela Sundell

Kathryn Longwell, North Slope Ex-Officio

Staff

Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer



MINUTES

Landmarks Preservation Commission Community and Economic Development Department

Date: June 10, 2009

LPC 89/09

Location: 728 St. Helens, Tacoma Municipal Bldg North, Room 16

Commission Members in Attendance:

Ross Buffington
Phillip Hill
Ken House
Imad Al Janabi, PhD.
Fred King
Megan Luce
Ha Pham
Pamela Sundell

Staff Present:

Reuben McKnight

Others Present:

Caroline T. Swope, PhD
Sharon Winters, Historic Tacoma
Kathy Ursich
Diane Walkup
Ramie Pierce

Commission Members Excused:

Mark McIntire

Vice Chair Ross Buffington called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

1. CONSENT AGENDA

Chair McIntire was excused.

2. DESIGN REVIEW

A. 405 6th Avenue

Mr. McKnight reported that the Commission's questions were communicated to the applicant and stated that the applicant contacted Staff two days prior to the meeting date that they would not be available to attend the meeting.

Mr. McKnight confirmed that the applicant is the owner of the Walker building.

3. BOARD BRIEFINGS

A. Sacred Places Survey Project

Ms. Carolyn Swope presented the Sacred Places Survey Project with photos.

Dr. Swope stated that she completed field visits of all the churches, synagogue and two Buddhist temples in the City of Tacoma. She talked about the losses of church buildings in the City over the years and explained that the project was a reconnaissance level survey of 250 religious properties. The work included policy recommendations for religious use properties and identifying potential register nominations. She noted that seven individually listed churches are currently on the Tacoma register. She said that churches dominate the city and that there are many historically worthy church buildings.

Dr. Swope presented the various styles in Tacoma churches, including classical revival styles (i.e., faux

Greco Roman) and Romanesque Style. She said that Gothic is probably the most popular non-vernacular Church building architecture, and that Mission is fairly uncommon in Tacoma. She said vernacular styles are often loosely modified Gothic in form rather than ornamentation. Dr. Swope said that there are great examples of Post World War II religious architecture in Tacoma, and mentioned the Synagogue (1968), and others in Prairie style and Formalist styles.

Dr. Swope emphasized that there are many, many unprotected historic church buildings in Tacoma. She framed the larger aspect of the many Church buildings in the City of Tacoma: What point in time are these buildings presently in, what the future might be like, and how the Commission can help shape that, from both the community's view and the City's point of view. She listed some of the several challenges: inappropriate remodels, lack of maintenance, no incentives for church organizations which do so much in the community.

She offered the following three examples of altered buildings over time that have significantly impacted the historic fabric:

- Slavic Church of One God (perhaps a Methodist Church, originally)
- Full Gospel Pentecostal (covered with siding)
- Peace Lutheran (wrapped faux craftsman, the addition covers the front)

Dr. Swope provided specific actions that could be taken by the Landmarks Preservation Commission:

- Help congregations to stay in their buildings – if decaying, it impacts crime and the neighborhood
- Churches provide civic identity in Tacoma – there is a great stock of 20th Century buildings
- Green aspect – very good building materials (i.e. stone, lumber, glass, etc)
- Perhaps use the transfer development rights program
- Low or no interest loans: to help with revitalization (carrot with sticks)
- Grant Assistance: matching funds, referrals
- Congregation doesn't match building size (too big/too small): help transfer congregations to existing historic church buildings
- Need to reach out to endangered congregations and growing congregations
- Find new uses for vacant church buildings (re-development planning)

Dr. Swope provided an "Awaken to Action" Summary. She said that after the preliminary surveying she will begin the research and writing phase; potentially 57 church buildings could be eligible for the register (criteria based on architectural style, community history, etc).

She said that a recommendation was for the Commission to take a more active advisory role in preservation. Mr. McKnight mentioned that the Church survey recommendations would be included in the City-wide preservation plan and noted the City's awareness on transfer development rights at the Planning Commission level.

Commissioners discussed vacant church buildings, re-adaptive use possibilities, sharing space by more than one congregation, challenge of deferred maintenance and start-up congregations, and working actively with organizations to prevent the demolition of church buildings.

Mr. McKnight stated that the demolition review ordinance proposal, historic themes (i.e. ethnic halls, etc) and gaps in the building inventory were identified as part of the Historic Preservation Planning consultants work plan.

Vice Chair Buffington asked Mr. McKnight to continue to provide progress reports on the survey project.

B. Urban Forestry Policy Element

Ms. Ramie Pierce, City of Tacoma Urban Forester, presented an update on the Draft Urban Forest Policy, which addresses how to address issues related to trees. The handout circulated to the Commission states: The UF Policy will develop a comprehensive, sustainable and integrated approach

to tree management on both public and private property. Public goals and policies will be created to address risk-management, maintaining Tree City USA status and preserving and protecting native, significant and historic trees.

The timeframe planned for adoption of the policy by the City Council is June 2010. The next phase would be updating the regulations to coordinate with the policies. Then the development of an UF Manual and an UF Management Plan to include sections for those parts of Tacoma that have specialized needs (i.e. historic districts, business districts, downtown, etc). Ms. Pierce encouraged Commission members to send her any questions and/or comments they may have.

Commissioner King commented there needed to be clarification on the concept of classic use of trees in an urban environment. He encouraged Ms. Pierce to include formal tree planting in the document. Also, he felt there was no clear statement within the document of how the city would intend to oversee tree planting and maintenance on private property.

Ms. Pierce replied that the issue of allowing for classic urban planning could be addressed in the individual management plans. Each management plan for each section would have a community input process.

Ms. Pierce stated that at this moment there is no intent by the city to regulate private property trees. There would need to be input from the community on this issue. There are cities in western Washington that do require planting when there is development.

Mr. McKnight asked if the downtown design guidelines had a tree requirement. Ms. Pierce replied that yes it was just for right-of-way. Private property does not have a minimum tree cover or minimum tree planting. Mr. McKnight asked if the developers did have a requirement to create trees on right-of-way. Ms. Pierce replied yes but only for street trees and depending on the zone, it is three to four trees for every 100 linear feet of development.

Ms. Pierce continued the third item of the responsibility being placed on the abutting property owner is currently in the municipal code. It is Title 8.30 which is a nuisance ordinance and 12.09 which addresses utilities, and others that address maintenance as the abutting private property owner's responsibility.

There was a question on the heritage tree program. Ms. Pierce replied that if an UF commission or board was created, they would be the ones to oversee the heritage tree program. She stated that there is a possibility that the Landmarks Preservation Commission could oversee that program.

Commissioner Al Janabi asked what was the goal of the study. If it was to write policy, or protect the individual tree, or to create green systems in the city. Ms. Pierce replied that some of the confusion would be worked out during the comprehensive plan amendment cycle. Urban Forest refers to the entire city's green parts, not just street trees. It includes open spaces as well as resident's front and back yards.

Mr. McKnight stated that the Planning Commission would also be reviewing the document.

Vice Chair Buffington asked for comment from the audience. Diane Walkup offered comments. Kathy Ursich offered comments.

4. CHAIR COMMENTS

There were no Chair comments.

5. STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. McKnight advised the Commission that the Pierce County Council Community Development Committee would be holding a public hearing on June 15, 2009 to discuss revising the public benefit rating system scoring for current use open space taxation. It appears the Pierce County Planning Commission held a meeting in March and the written comment period has passed. Mr. McKnight explained the public benefit rating system and that in Pierce County archeological and historical sites are rated as low priority. Our proposal was to move historical sites up to a medium category to get the minimum amount of points. The county is proposing elimination of the point system and creating a different system whereby there needs to be either one high priority resource to meet minimum qualifications, or two medium resources, or three low resources.

Mr. McKnight continued the city council adopted the downtown plan which includes recommending and promoting a revised scoring system to Pierce County for historic preservation purposes. He encouraged the Commission members to review the document on the county council website. He stated that the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation would also be in attendance at the meeting on June 15.

6. BOARD BUSINESS/PRESERVATION PLANNING

Vice Chair Buffington reminded Commission members of the Public Hearing on June 24, 2009 on the Wedge Neighborhood application to become a historic district.

Meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Submitted as True and Correct:

Reuben McKnight
Historic Preservation Officer