



TO: Members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
FROM: Reuben McKnight
SUBJECT: Wedge Neighborhood Historic District proposal - Boundaries
DATE: March 25, 2009

Background

On June 27, 2008, residents of the “Wedge” Neighborhood submitted a written request for consideration of the neighborhood as a historic special review district overlay zone. The proposed area extends roughly from Division Avenue to the north, to 6th Avenue at the southern boundary, and L Street at the eastern boundary. The western-most point is the location where Division Avenue meets 6th Avenue at Sprague (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proposed Wedge Neighborhood Historic District study area



The Landmarks Preservation Commission has considered the boundaries for the proposed Wedge Neighborhood Historic District at its meetings of December 10, 2008, January 14, 2009, and February 25, 2009. In addition, the Commission took a walking tour of the area on March 4, 2009.

Discussion

In a memorandum from the December 10, 2008 Commission meeting, staff recommended the following considerations for preliminary boundary determinations:

1. Historic character and age.

According to TMC 13.07.040, a proposed historic district should retain integrity of “location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association such that it is able to convey its historical, cultural, or architectural significance,” in addition to meeting one or more of six criteria for measuring significance.

This suggests that the prevailing character of an area proposed for a historic district should not only contain historic buildings, but that the setting, location, and feeling that are associated with the significant historical themes should also remain intact. Thus, areas with little or no historic context, in district terms, should not be considered, whereas areas where the street, surrounding buildings, and overall environment are consistent with the character of the proposed district and buildings should be considered.

2. Underlying zoning and land use development regulations.

The Commission may consider the appropriateness of including areas within the historic district that are not zoned consistently with the goals of the historic overlay.

However, this potentially introduces a conflict wherein the development standards, permitted uses and targeted density are inconsistent with the objectives of the historic overlay. For areas possessing historic character that the Commission feels should be included in the historic overlay zone, it should be considered whether a rezone of the base zone should be considered. In addition, the consistency with the Comprehensive Plan goals for the area, existing regulations, and compatibility between the overlay and the base zone will be a consideration of the Planning Commission.

Additional factors to consider include:

1. Cohesiveness under TMC 13.07.040C.

TMC 13.07.040C states that an area under consideration as a historic district “...shall contain a concentration of structures having a special character or special historic, cultural, architectural, engineering, or geographic interest or value” as defined by the landmarks designation criteria, and that “the area shall constitute a distinct section of the City.”

This suggests that areas to be included in the historic overlay district should be predominantly consistent in development era with the overall district’s period of significance, and that boundaries should take advantage of existing development patterns, street and block configuration, and cohesive character.

In practice, this means that borders of historic plats, main arterials, areas of contrasting development type and land use patterns, and areas of contrasting development era

provide definition to neighborhood areas in the city, and also are suitable for consideration as borders of historic districts.

2. Neighborhood goals

The Commission may consider the stated objectives of the community nominating the district in its consideration of appropriate boundaries.

3. Property owner and public sentiment

Because historic district development is neighborhood driven, and is an elective zoning process, it is dependent upon the support of the neighborhood. Likewise, significant opposition must be considered. Areas, especially on the periphery of the district, in which the clear majority of owners oppose the district, the Commission may consider removing from consideration.

Analysis

<p>1. Historic character and age</p>	<p>An analysis of buildings that are 50+ years of age within the district shows that the oldest known build date is 1889 and the most recent is 1931.</p> <p>There are portions of the district, including Sixth Avenue to the south, and the Hospital-Medical zone to the east, are not consistent with the age and history of the proposed district. In some cases, this zoning has resulted in development that has removed the historic character of the area, and therefore, staff recommends that these areas should be excluded from the district.</p>
<p>2. Underlying zoning and development regulations</p>	<p>The core of the area is zoned R2-SRD, which is bordered by HM (Hospital-Medical) to the east at M Street, and C2 (Commercial) along 6th Avenue.</p> <p>Portions of the district are zoned consistently, in terms of density, with low density detached dwellings, the historically predominant use of the area.</p> <p>Hospital Medical Zone</p> <p>There are a number of historically contributing buildings within the Hospital-Medical zone, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berg Apartments, 1304 Division Ave. The Berg Apartments, built in 1916, are within the Hospital Medical zone, but are architecturally intact. The Berg, along with

	<p>the apartments at the 1300 block of Sixth, represent historic multifamily housing along the arterials at the periphery of the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nason Apartments, 421 S M Street • Residences on 500 Block of S L <p>Commercial (C-2) Zone</p> <p>The following buildings within the C-2 zone are within the study area and may be considered contributing to a residential historic district, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creso Court (1521 6th Avenue), which is currently emergency housing operated by the Salvation Army. This is a relatively intact 1927 Bungalow Court apartment structure. It is within the C2 zoning designation, but is also within the development period of the district and represents a form that was very common prior to WWII. • The 1300 block of Sixth Avenue is zoned C2 Commercial, although the buildings on this block are excellent examples of early historic apartments. These include: 1301, 1305, 1319 and 1325 6th Avenue. • Portions of the 500 Block of South L Street, including 516 and 518 South L and the house at 1203 6th Avenue
<p>3. Cohesiveness</p>	<p>The vacant parcels in the 500 block of South M Street create a substantial nonhistoric area within the district, especially on the eastern side of the street, where the nonhistoric development extends to Sixth Avenue.</p> <p>The homes along the 500 block of South L Street are some of the earliest homes in the district. However, they are somewhat isolated from the remainder of the district.</p>
<p>4. Neighborhood Goals</p>	<p>The district nomination request stipulates that historically residential buildings are to be the focus of the historic district, and that commercial properties, religious properties and other nonresidential buildings should be</p>

	excluded.
<p>5. Property owner and public sentiment</p>	<p>In a letter to the Commission dated February 2, 2009 and revised on February 25, MultiCare Health Systems stated the desire that properties it owns be excluded from the district, as well as properties within the existing Hospital Medical Zone.</p> <p>Most of the properties owned by MultiCare within the study area are modern, office or medical construction, and therefore are not considered historically significant or consistent with the objectives of the district. Properties that are owned by MultiCare that may be considered by the Commission to be historically significant include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1216 S 4th Street (R2-SRD zone) • 1218 S 4th Street (R2-SRD zone) • 407 S M Street (R2-SRD zone) • 417 S M Street (R2-SRD zone) <p>While a formal opinion survey of property owners in the district has yet to be conducted (scheduled for May 27), Mr. Paul Post indicated at the January 28th information session hosted by the Commission that he is opposed to the district formation including the 500 Block of South L, in which he owns six of the eleven parcels. Mr. Post also attended the Wedge Walking Tour on March 4, and affirmed his opposition to the inclusion of the 500 Block of South, and added that he'd discussed the issue with neighbors on the block, whom he characterized as opposed as well.</p> <p>While specific numbers have yet to be derived from the survey, it appears likely that a majority of ownership on this block will oppose inclusion in the district.</p>

Recommendation

1. The density of historic residential buildings, and the cohesiveness of the proposed district, should be the primary drive for the formation of the boundaries.

2. The R2-SRD zone should provide the general basis for the borders of the proposed historic district. The Hospital-Medical zone and C2 Commercial zone contain few historically contributing buildings. In addition, in general terms these zoning boundaries also define clear contrasts in development pattern and character.
3. Blocks in which a majority of property ownership is known to be opposed, or anticipated to be in opposition to the formation of the historic district, should be excluded.

Therefore:

1. The 500 Block of South L Street should be omitted from consideration. The Commission can reasonably expect that a majority of owners will oppose the nomination. In addition, MultiCare's stated position that the HM zoned properties should also be excluded is consistent with this recommendation. Lastly, due to the high concentration of vacant land and nonhistoric development along the 500 Block of South M Street, this block is isolated from the core district, making it difficult to rationally connect with the core district.
2. In general, the HM zone should be excluded. However, several buildings within the HM zone are part of a cohesive development pattern of the historic area. These buildings include:
 - Berg Apartments, 1304 Division Ave.
 - Nason Apartments, 421 S M Street
 - Residences on 500 Block of S L
3. In general, buildings in the C2 zoning district should be excluded. Most are commercial in nature, and therefore not consistent with the objectives of the district. In addition, several are also modern construction. However, there are buildings that are part of the cohesive historic development pattern and should be included. These buildings are:
 - 1521 6th Avenue
 - 1301, 1305, 1319 and 1325 6th Avenue
4. The eastern portion of the 400 Block of South L Street includes 5 properties owned by MultiCare Health Systems, four of which could be considered historically contributing to the district. Four properties are owned by private entities. MultiCare's stated position is that it does not want properties within its ownership included in the district. However, the subject properties are also predominantly historically intact. Among the private property owners, one individual has stated firm support for the district. The others have not commented at this point. In terms of clear delineation between historic areas, and modern areas, the visual boundary is east of M Street in the alley. Therefore, it is recommended that this block be included in the proposed district put forth for public comment.

Conservation Districts

Discussion

The Commission has expressed concern over the edge conditions of the district and explored the concept of conservation districts being established on the boundaries of the proposed district.

Representatives for MultiCare have indicated that they do not believe that a conservation overlay on the Tacoma General Hospital Campus is appropriate, and that SEPA-based environmental review could address concerns over impacts on the district from adjacent development activities. In addition, that the City may wish to consider updates to its SEPA rules for historic preservation issues.

TMC 13.07.040D states that, when considering the appropriateness of a conservation district, the commission shall consider:

1. A potential Conservation District should normally be established surrounding an established or proposed historic district and shall possess special historic, architectural, or cultural significance that is a part of the heritage of the City.
2. Although it shall possess historic character which shares or is sympathetic to the development patterns and period of significance of the adjacent historic district, a Conservation District is not required to meet the criteria for landmark designation as outlined above.

Recommendation

1. Areas to the east of the proposed district, including the buildings along the 400 Block of South L Street, do not appear to meet the above criteria for designation as a conservation district overlay, due to the absence of any period construction in this area. An exception could be the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at 1201 S 4th Street; however, this is a religious property that is not subject to historic district regulations, and does not define a significant edge.
2. Properties along 6th Avenue of historic merit potentially include the warehouses at 1601 6th Avenue and 1501 6th Avenue. The Trinity Episcopal Church campus, including its parsonage, is historically significant, and does anchor the corner of the Wedge Neighborhood. While the church cannot be included in the district against its will, Staff recommends proposing this area for inclusion in a potential conservation overlay.

