

Wedge Neighborhood News

January 26, 2021

Local LDS Church Proposed for Demolition

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring to your attention the proposed demolition of the church located at 1201 South 4th Street adjacent to the Wedge Neighborhood. The church is owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but the demolition permit is being requested by Construction Group International on behalf of MultiCare.

On Wednesday, January 27, the City of Tacoma's Landmarks Preservation Commission will consider the historic value of the church and the request for demolition.

As you may be aware, MultiCare has announced plans for a new \$300 million Mary Bridge complex which will involve the demolition of Jackson Hall, a parking garage at Division and MLK and the original freestanding Mary Bridge building. Construction of the new Mary Bridge building is scheduled to begin this year and MultiCare is planning to conduct a series of neighborhood meetings to get community feedback on this project's external and internal design.

The LDS church was constructed in 1951 and designed by architects Pope & Thomas of Salt Lake City and Tacoma firm Mock and Morrison in the Colonial Revival style. Pope & Thomas was an influential designer of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints houses of worship, and Mock & Morrison of Tacoma are known for their work on the Western State Hospital and University of Puget Sound campuses. The church is surrounded by the MultiCare campus. The spire is visible from many homes located in the Wedge

This building is no longer operating as a church. An historical assessment completed on behalf of Construction Group International indicates that the property has historical value. The Tacoma Historic Preservation staff has concluded that the property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association such that it is able to convey its historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

However, the LDS Church is opposed to listing this building on Tacoma's historic register. Consequently, Tacoma's City Attorney has concluded that existing State Supreme Court rulings prevent the compulsory historic listing due to the Freedom of Exercise clause of the state constitution. Furthermore, the City's Historic Preservation staff will not ask the Landmarks Commission to recommend listing on the historic register. Nevertheless, if you have strong feeling about this proposed demolition, I urge you to contact the City of Tacoma's Historic Preservation Officer Reuben McKnight at reuben.mcknight@cityoftacoma.org .

The Landmarks Preservation Commission meeting starts at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, January 27. It can be viewed remotely at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87622197201> . The LDS church is the first major item on their agenda.

-Ross Buffington 502 S. Sheridan Ave. rjbuffington@comcast.net (253) 267-1066

From: [Ross and Julie Buffington](#)
To: [McKnight, Reuben](#)
Subject: Proposed Demolition of LDS Church - 1201 S. 4th St.
Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:25:01 AM

Dear Mr. McKnight:

Please convey to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) my strong opposition to the proposed demolition of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located at 1201 S. 4th St. It is clear from the review conducted by Studio TJP that the building is in good repair and has significant historical value. It is a well-known landmark in the City of Tacoma and especially so in the Wedge neighborhood where I live. I can see the church's spire from my home.

I understand that the City Attorney has indicated that the opposition to listing the building on the Tacoma Historic Register by the building's owner's - the LDS Church - takes precedence over any action by the LPC or other City office.

Nevertheless, I urge the LPC and appropriate City offices to oppose its demolition. They should ask the Church and Construction Group International why this building must be demolished. Why can't it be slated for adaptive reuse? If it is demolished, do they have a plan to provide photographic evidence of the building and to salvage existing building materials.

Demolition of buildings such as this take the City of Tacoma another step forward along the path to losing its historic heritage.

-Ross Buffington
502 S. Sheridan Ave.