

# Cultural Resources

## Existing Conditions Analysis

### Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan

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## HISTORY

The Tacoma Mall Neighborhood study area (study area) lies in the traditional territory of the Steilacoom and Puyallup Tribes, whose members are part of the larger Southern Coast Salish Lushootseed linguistic group (Suttles and Lane 1990). Several permanent villages and place names along the marine shores of Tacoma and its waterways have been noted in the historical record.

The Southern Coast Salish are skillful fishers, with shellfish and salmon being the largest staple traditional marine food resources. Throughout the year, deer, waterfowl, and berries were also obtained as additional food resources. Villages consisted of one or more plank houses with a few smaller structures. The Southern Coast Salish used canoes for transportation along waterways, with several designs made for specific transport needs. Despite Tacoma's shores and inland areas having experienced consistent use during the precontact period, no specific native places have been identified within the subarea.

Early survey records indicate that the study area vicinity was originally swamp and prairie land (US Surveyor General 1867). The earliest documented road was located approximately one mile north of the Tacoma Mall, running east/west from Commencement Bay (US Surveyor General 1867). Land patent records indicate that Euroamerican settlers started occupying the subarea in the late 1800s, including George O. Kelly (US Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management [BLM] 1874), Martin H. Smith (BLM 1883), Cornelius Wing (BLM 1884), and Aaron G. Vradenburg (BLM 1889).

Tacoma boomed in the 1870s and 1880s when it was selected as the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1873, followed by the completion of the transcontinental link in 1883. A bust came during the Panic of 1893, but the city rebounded in the early 1900s with its warehouses, lumber industry, and grain terminals. A second slump hit Tacoma following World War I when there was a steep drop in the price of lumber. Again, the city persevered with the expansion of Camp Lewis (becoming Fort Lewis) and the defense build-up for World War II.

The study area experienced a housing boom starting in 1943 as soldiers returned from War. This, in concert with urban renewal, transformed the city. The addition of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1950, and Interstate 5 in 1965, made travel by car more convenient than by ferry and rail (Wilma and Crowley 2003). This new infrastructure also made it easier for families to travel farther out of their neighborhoods to shop for goods in centralized shopping areas. The Tacoma Mall was built in response to this opportunity in 1965. The Mall was designed by John Graham, Jr., who received international recognition for his large-scale shopping complexes. Graham was instrumental in conceiving the model for the suburban shopping center and the Tacoma Mall is the first ever large-scale, indoor suburban shopping complex. Graham is also famous for designing the Seattle Space Needle (MacIntosh 1998). Because of these factors, the Tacoma Mall is likely eligible for listing on the National Register.

## PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED CULTURAL RESOURCES

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Archival research shows only one nearby property as being listed on the Washington State Register and the National Historic Register—the Tacoma Mausoleum. This structure, located a half mile southwest of the Mall and constructed in the Beaux Arts style, was built in 1910 by architects George Gove and Silas Nelsen (Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation [DAHP] 1981). Other nearby historic resources are the cemeteries situated three blocks southwest of the Mall—the 1875 Tacoma Cemetery (Department of Archaeological and Historic Preservation [DAHP] 2005), which contains many of the cities founding fathers, the 1885 Pauper Cemetery (DAHP 2008), and the 1874 Oakwood Hill Cemetery (DAHP 2005). None of these resources are listed on an historic register. The Tacoma Historic Register does not have any properties listed in the Mall vicinity or Tacoma Mall Neighborhood study area.

The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) requires that historic property inventory forms be completed for all properties within a project area that are 50 years of age or older, and for larger scale projects, they recommend that a survey cut-off date of 40 years be implemented. Based on these guidelines, the Tacoma Mall itself qualifies as an historic property (having been built in 1965), and most of the homes in the study area meet the same requirements for recording. The same guidelines indicate that the Groit's Garage building (located at 3333 S 38th Street and built in 1950) and the Madison School building (located at 3111 S 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and built in 1955) may also qualify as historic properties. As part of historic preservation efforts, a 2005 report on the South Tacoma and South End neighborhoods recommended identifying potential Historic Districts and mid-century resources in these areas, including the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood study area (Eysaman & Company 2005).

There are no known cultural or archaeological resources within the study area. An examination of DAHP's predictive model, a tool used to calculate the probability of encountering pre-contact resources based on landform and proximity to known activity areas, indicates that there is a moderate to high risk for cultural resources within the study area. However, this model is only a "first step" in cultural resources investigations, and does not account for modern impacts such as urbanization, which would lower the risk of a project affecting intact cultural resources.

Figure CR-1. Tacoma Mall, rendering of the interior (1963-1964). Architecture Collection, Image Number PH Coll 339.A94a, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle.



In addition to historically designated or eligible sites, there are also landmarks that are familiar and recognizable features of the neighborhood. One example is the characteristic Arby's sign located on S 38th Street shaped like a cowboy hat. These features may be valued by the community and contribute to a sense of neighborhood identity.

## PUBLIC ART

Though there is relatively little existing public art in the study area, there are assets located within the Tacoma Police Headquarters and at the intersection of S 47<sup>th</sup> Street and S Tacoma Way. Tacoma Police Headquarters assets include (City of Tacoma Arts Commission, undated):

- *Chroma Twist*, John Rogers, 2005, 50' x 36' x 12', Aluminum tube, dichroic glass, stainless steel cable (Figure CR-2)
- *Drivelines*, John Rogers, 2005, covers a 17' x 14' x 19' area, Aluminum tube, dichroic glass, stainless (located within Tacoma Police Fleet Services lobby)
- *Cyan Spiral*, John Rogers, 2005, 50' x 26' x 12', Aluminum tube, dichroic glass, stainless steel cable
- *The Thin Blue Line*, James Kelsey, Glass tiles, 5" h x 89' w, 2006
- *Memories of Blue*, James Kelsey Granite, Silicon Bronze, Stainless Steel, Aluminum rod, Glass, 17' h x 10' w x 8' d, 2006
- *For All They Gave*, James Kelsey, Granite, Silicon Bronze, 3" h x 17' w x 8' d, 2006

Near the southeast corner of the S 47th Street and S Tacoma Way intersection, the *Gateway Art Project* by Fritz Church is installed in a lawn area along the S Tacoma Way sidewalk. The sculpture is fabricated steel, and was commissioned by the South Tacoma Business District.



Figure CR-2. Photo of Chrome Twist by John Rogers, public art displayed at Tacoma Police Headquarters; photo courtesy of the City of Tacoma Arts Commission (City of Tacoma Arts Commission, undated).

In addition to these existing public art installations, the City is preparing to commission an artwork series for the Water Flume Line Trail/Oak Tree Park in S. Tacoma, as well as an artwork series along South Tacoma Way. Both projects will likely be located predominantly outside of the study area, as they are planned to extend north to S 47th Street and run south along the Water Flume Line Trail and S Tacoma Way, respectively. The City is partnering with Metro Parks Tacoma for the Water Flume Line Trail project, and is partnering with State Farm, LISC, and the South Tacoma Business District for the S Tacoma Way project.

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