



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TULSA PRESERVATION COMMISSION

created from the CORE TULSA REPORT

The Tulsa Preservation Commission believes that the protection, enhancement, and continued use of Downtown Tulsa's historically and architecturally significant structures is a public necessity, required in the interest of prosperity and civic pride. The Tulsa Preservation Commission believes that a high regard for and careful treatment of our architectural and cultural assets is intrinsic to the economic, cultural, and aesthetic enrichment of our City. Preservation of significant existing buildings for continued use or adaptive reuse within Downtown Tulsa is of vital importance.

Based on recommendations presented to the Tulsa Preservation Commission by the grassroots organization known as **CORE – Current Opportunities to Reinvent & Energize Downtown Tulsa** – and subsequent stakeholder input processes, the Tulsa Preservation Commission requests that the following actions be pursued by the City of Tulsa. These recommendations address areas of concern for Downtown Tulsa including protection and enhancement of the built environment, building demolition, surface parking, and historic preservation as a catalyst for economic development.

1. SURVEY

A comprehensive inventory of all of Tulsa's downtown buildings is the essential first step to effectively planning for the future of downtown and crafting public policies for our built environment.

The information assembled in such a survey will be useful not only for preservation efforts, but also to developers, realtors, entrepreneurs, building owners, government agencies, educators, and tourism promotion organizations. An intensive-level architectural survey will aid the City in prioritizing areas for preservation, redevelopment, and new development.

- The inventory should be tailored to Tulsa's specific needs, as determined by all parties concerned: Tulsa Preservation Commission, Economic Development Commission, building owners and policy-makers, downtown advocacy groups. The process should be inclusive.
- The inventory should include analysis of the impact of demolition of identified buildings on downtown development, prioritization of buildings at risk for loss, and identification of high-priority buildings for redevelopment.
- The inventory should not neglect minor structures, and should recognize that small buildings are vital to Tulsa's urban fabric and act as a catalyst for small businesses to start and grow.
- Funding for the survey should occur through public-private partnerships. The City should work with private organizations in a coordinated effort to see the project through.
- Work should be completed in a timely manner by a professional architectural/cultural resources firm.

- Findings should be incorporated into the existing Comprehensive Plan and the Comprehensive Plan Update for District One, as well as development of future incentives.
- Findings should also be used in the development of demolition policies.
- TPC could lead or assist coordination, from funding to project administration, as deemed appropriate.

2. PARKING

Surface parking lots have proliferated in Downtown Tulsa, eroding the urban fabric, livability, walkability, and property tax revenues, as many buildings have been demolished for surface parking. In addition, the abundance of lower-cost surface parking makes the preferred structured parking solution less viable. Despite this, the perception that “there’s nowhere to park downtown” persists. **The City of Tulsa and Tulsa Parking Authority should revisit its parking plan, and put new policies into action that move the City ahead of the demand curve for structured parking. Surface parking should be discouraged by all means possible.**

- Enact incentives for developers to include structured parking within their buildings, especially when building infill on surface lots.
- Provide no incentives for developments which include demolition of buildings for surface parking in the Central Business District.
- Change surface parking from a use by right to a special exception in the Central Business District zoning code.
- Work with local businesses and with religious, educational, and other institutions to create parking plans that address their needs within the framework of the City of Tulsa’s greater good.
- Consider strategies such as those recently enacted in Albuquerque, whereas the City considers structured parking a component of the infrastructure that it provides to the public. New developments in Albuquerque do not have to provide parking for their tenants because the City will provide it for them. Albuquerque markets this concept as an incentive. New surface lots are prohibited, and new parking structures and infill buildings have begun to rise on existing surface lots.

3. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Elements of the existing Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Strategic Plan, the Downtown Public Investment Coordination Plan (Downtown Linkages Report), the Report of the Infill Development Task Force, and the Tulsa Preservation Commission Historic Preservation Resource Document often dovetail. This is especially true in identifying Downtown Tulsa as a special area, with goals of building on the downtown’s base of architectural resources to increase investment, livability, and broad appeal. **These elements should be coordinated and capitalized on to make preservation a fundamental specific component of future comprehensive planning efforts, and to create policies which reinforce Downtown’s uniqueness and character.**

- District One of the City of Tulsa’s Comprehensive Plan, the Central Business District (CBD), is a district that deserves special consideration; as such, we should develop District Standards for design review to ensure compatible, high-quality development and redevelopment. Recommendations of the existing Comprehensive Plan for District One (downtown) such as district design standards and review should be revisited for present use and coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan Update.
- The Comprehensive Plan Update should include a preservation component, especially for District One.
- The Tulsa Preservation Commission should have a seat at the table throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process.
- The Comprehensive Plan Update should incorporate the Survey findings into its plan for District One. Policies for treatment of building demolition requests should be expanded.

4. INCENTIVES & PROMOTION

The Tulsa Preservation Commission identifies and supports incentives for new development, redevelopment of existing properties, and promoting the market, rather than regulations, as the primary force that drives such development. **The Commission supports development of new incentives and promotion of existing incentives; additionally, the Commission asks the City to support efforts to change perceptions about downtown and the value of our historic buildings.**

- The Tulsa Economic Development Team and the Urban Development Division should be designated to serve as facilitators to assist property owners undertaking development projects within the CBD, expediting all processes as much as possible. Improved coordination between different entities, from the Fire Department to the City's permit officials to INCOG to the Parking Authority, should smooth and expedite the development process and act as an incentive in itself.
- The Commission will continue to facilitate existing preservation-related incentives, such as historic preservation tax credits, and recommends development of additional incentive programs to stimulate reinvestment.
- The City should step up promotion of our existing incentives, such as historic preservation tax credits, for buildings and developments of all sizes.
- The City should consider creating more incentives to stimulate downtown residents and businesses, such as the property tax abatement for new downtown homeowners successfully used in Center City Philadelphia with phenomenal results. Other incentives could include waiving permit fees for downtown developments and creating structured parking incentives.
- A public relations campaign that promotes downtown as "Everybody's Neighborhood" and existing buildings as useful opportunities, rather than roadblocks, should be undertaken in partnership with local organizations.

5. DEMOLITION REVIEW

A demolition permit review process should be created to prevent the loss of buildings that may have historical or architectural significance, and to provide the time necessary to consider alternative uses for the structure. This review process should consider the findings of the above-mentioned Survey, parking policies, comprehensive planning efforts, and incentive promotion. However, given the urgency of this issue and the finite number of historic structures in Downtown, the review process should be put into effect as soon as possible.

- A review panel designated by the Tulsa Preservation Commission should review applications for demolition of existing Downtown buildings, triggering a stay of demolition no longer than 120 days.
- To begin the review process, the demolition permit applicant will provide to the review panel the following information:
 1. Necessity of proposed demolition
 2. Economic value of the building from the owner's or developer's perspective
 3. Engineer's or architect's report of structural condition of the building
 4. Proposed use for the site after demolition, including economic value of new use
- The demolition review panel will determine and report to the Tulsa Preservation Commission the following information:
 1. Historic and/or architectural significance, as determined in the downtown Survey
 2. Effects of proposed demolition on surrounding urban fabric
 3. Feasibility and opportunities for continued use or reuse of the structure
 4. Potential incentives available for rehabilitation and reuse
- Based on panel's report, the Tulsa Preservation Commission would vote to recommend to the Building Inspector either approval or denial of the demolition permit. The Tulsa Preservation Commission's decision could be appealed to the Board of Adjustment.