



Community Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission
From: Mona Davis, Community & Economic Development Director
Andrew Love, Contract Planner
Date of Memo: May 13, 2025
Date of Meeting: May 19, 2025
Subject: Snoqualmie Color Palette (Chapter 17.35 SMC)

INTRODUCTION:

City staff have been tasked with updates to the color palette. Currently, Chapter 17.35 of the Snoqualmie Municipal Code (SMC) requires historical design review for the City's "historic district overlay zones," "downtown historic commercial landmark district," and individual landmarks.

Type I projects are administrative and can include "exterior painting of **noncontributing** buildings or structures [in the overlay zones and/or landmark district], **using approved colors**" (SMC 17.35.120(A)(2)).

Type II projects are reviewed by the historic preservation officer, who makes a staff report and recommendation to the Historical Design Review Board (which the Planning Commission has been serving as for many years). A Type II project can include the following:

- "For **contributing** buildings or structures [in the Landmark District or individual Landmarks], any alteration in exterior appearance or replacement of historic materials with nonhistoric materials" (SMC 17.35.120(B)(1)).
- "For **noncontributing** buildings or structures [in the overlay zones and/or landmark district], any exterior repairs (other than emergency repairs needed for the immediate protection of property, life or safety) or alterations other than those designated as Type I" (SMC 17.35.120(B)(2)).

Previously, the city has heard frustration from the business owners over the limited color palette based on the expense and lengthy process to seek a variance from these standards.

BACKGROUND:

- On February 3, 2025, City staff brought a memorandum to Planning Commission seeking feedback on potential updates to the City's historic overlay color palette.
- On April 7, 2025, City staff presented potential options for updating the color palette and posed several questions for discussion. Some communities like the City of Orting maintained strict color options, whereas other cities like Burien, Carnation, and Gig Harbor have more general guidelines. In Carnation's case, there is a chart outlining which types of colors are allowed without prescribing certain shades.
- On April 21, 2025, staff provided the Planning Commission a wide range of colors from the two historic paint collections mentioned above, but it was determined that it would be better to return with only the Orting colors (which include 24 out of 60 colors in the Sherwin-Williams Historical Color Collection) and the currently approved Snoqualmie color palette (which feature 16 colors, with limitations on mixing and matching).
- On May 5, 2025, King County Historic Preservation came to present and also later gave feedback on the color palette issue. In addition, two other members of the public gave input as did Councilmember Jo Johnson. After a lengthy discussion of options and weighing pros and cons, the Planning Commission gave guidance on what to have ready for the Planning Commission for the Public Hearing.

Attachment 1 includes the colors from both attachments of the last meeting, which was framed as option #3 (keep current Snoqualmie color palette with option to mix and match **and** add the 24 identified Sherwin-Williams options). Exact paint chip samples may differ than what is displayed on screen or printed.

Attachment 2 provides an example of what a less stringent color palette could look like, where certain color families are allowed or prohibited, based on whether it is a main color, trim, or accent. This is just a starting point to facilitate discussion and consideration during the public hearing, and revisions would likely be required if the Planning Commission prefers this approach.

Lastly, **Attachment 3** provides example language that could supplement the color guidelines if Planning Commission prefers that approach (for example, Attachment 3 would provide additional context when selecting colors).

NEXT STEPS:

Depending on feedback from the Planning Commission and what we hear in the Public Hearing, staff will prepare an updated color palette exhibit and bring it back to Planning Commission to obtain a recommendation to City Council. Currently, SMC 17.35.040(C) defines an approved color as "a color from a palette approved by the historic design review board and maintained on file by the historic preservation officer." The color palette will be brought to the Community Development Committee before City Council.

Code amendments to Chapter 17.35 will be done separately, as additional research and coordination is needed, in addition to draft a non-project SEPA checklist and sending the revisions to Commerce for 60-day review.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Figure – existing Snoqualmie color palette with the added Sherwin-Williams color options (from the City of Orting)
2. Draft Figure – acceptable building color examples
3. Example language to potentially supplement figure of acceptable building colors