



Community Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission
From: Mona Davis, Community Development Director
Andrew Love, Contract Planner
Date of Memo: May 1, 2025
Date of Meeting: May 5, 2025
Subject: Historic Preservation Code Amendments
(Chapter 17.35 SMC, Historic Overlay Zones and Landmarks)

INTRODUCTION:

Updates are needed to Chapter 17.35 of the Snoqualmie Municipal Code (SMC). This was brought to our attention while coordinating with King County for feedback on the color palette overlay (*which is being addressed as a separate agenda item*). The most recent amendment to this chapter of code was Ordinance No. 1273.

Prior staff was already working to make this chapter of code more streamlined and back into conformance with the city/county interlocal agreement (1994). Current staff is picking up where they left off.

BACKGROUND:

On April 10, 1995, City Council adopted Ordinance No. 744, which created Chapter 17.35 of the Snoqualmie Municipal Code, Historic Overlay Zones and Landmarks, and therefore two Historic District Overlay Zones, the **Downtown Historic District Overlay Zone** and the **Meadowbrook Historic District Overlay Zone**. Later on January 22, 2001, City Council adopted Ordinance No. 874, repealing Chapter 16.26 (Landmarks) and amending various sections of Chapter 17.35, including Section 17.35.090, which establishes the **Downtown Historic Commercial Landmark District**. These code changes were made in response to the Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission designating the Downtown Historic Commercial Landmark District, a regulated area distinct from, but overlapping, the Downtown Historic District Overlay Zone. Given the similarity of the names of the landmark district and the historic overlay, this has created significant confusion over the years. Draft revisions to this chapter are forthcoming to bring further clarity and to fix inconsistencies with the 1994 Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with King County relating to landmark designation and protection services.

CONCERNS WITH ORDINANCE 1273 (ADOPTED 1/23/2023):

Notably, Ordinance 1273 repealed Section 17.35.030, removing the connection to Chapter 20.62 of the King County Code (KCC). This connection was established in the City's/County's interlocal agreement (ILA) in 1994, partnering with King County to provide preservation services to the Snoqualmie community. The purpose of the ILA and Ordinance 874 (2001) was to reference (and tailor) preservation code elements rather than recreate them. The code amendments in Ordinance No. 1273 attempt to adopt the portions of the King County Code directly instead of by reference (for example, the changes to some Sections like Definitions) but it also altered the path of many types of review to go through a City-created Historical Design Review Board (and ultimately the Planning Commission) rather than the ILA-based Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission. In addition, while the ordinance attempted to clarify the processing of different application types, the code remains unclear.

Through the ILA, the **Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission** (previously the Snoqualmie Landmarks and Heritage Commission) is a 10-person commission created by the 9-person King County Landmarks Commission plus one "Special Commissioner" appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council. This Special Commissioner was previously Dave Battey but is now vacant. The remaining 9-person King County Landmarks Commission still meets to review landmark designation as the Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission, but ideally the Special Commissioner would be replaced in the future.

Since the code was revised in 2023 and the link to KCC 20.62 repealed, this Commission appears to have limited mechanisms left to define or activate it, yet it is still listed as responsible for preservation activities. This includes landmark designation in Section 17.35.060 SMC.

OTHER CONCERNS:

Section 17.35.050 establishes a dedicated **Snoqualmie Historical Design Review Board** (HDRB) since 2001. In 2018, Section 17.35.055 was inserted into the code under Ordinance No. 1203, which routed historical design review to the Planning Commission in the absence of a Snoqualmie HDRB. The City will need to determine if it makes sense to still have a separate HDRB. The HDRB cannot designate new landmarks or review preservation tax incentive applications, including preservation grants available through 4Culture, the Washington State Historical Society, and the Washington State Special Valuation property tax program. This is solely done through the Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission (outlined above). The City uses landmark designation through our ILA with King County, so the reasoning behind the creation of an HDRB remains unclear. By itself, Snoqualmie's historic preservation program would not be eligible for grant funding and other benefits afforded to Snoqualmie Landmark properties or those within Snoqualmie's Landmark District, as it does not meet the professional qualification requirements state and county agencies require to access preservation incentives. In addition, alterations made to designated landmarks that do not follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – the review standards used by the ILA-based Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission – risk losing access to these incentive programs, and potentially their landmark designation under the ILA.

In addition, the processes for the different types of review have never been very clear. For example, staff (together with recommendations/decisions by Planning Commission, Community Development Committee, and City Council) would need to determine what the review process would look like for an alteration to a building that is both within the Downtown Historic Commercial Landmark District and the Downtown Historic District Overlay Zone or if something is only in the Overlay Zone. Staff finds the processes overly complicated and strenuous to get approval from both the Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission and the HDRB (which the Planning Commission has been serving as).

NEXT STEPS:

Staff will work on draft edits to the code, with feedback from King County's Historic Preservation team. We may also need to solicit feedback from other stakeholders during this process. The timing on returning to Planning Commission with proposed amendments will depend on the scope involved. At the moment it is hard to determine, depending on if substantial changes are made to any of the review processes and also the boundaries of the various districts and overlay zones. However, the first draft of the code amendments will likely return at the June 2, 2025 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Table of Ordinance History Related to Historic Preservation/Chapter 17.35 SMC
2. 1994 Interlocal Agreement for Landmark Services