



## 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: Snoqualmie Color Palette (Chapter 17.35 SMC)

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#### INTRODUCTION:

City staff have been tasked with updates to the color palette. Currently, local businessowners and residents are held to the approved colors in the following circumstances, although this may change depending on future code amendments to Chapter 17.35 of the Snoqualmie Municipal Code (SMC), which will be under review as a separate task.

#### ***17.35.110 Uniform application of historic design standards and procedures.***

*The regulations, standards, guidelines and procedures of this chapter shall be uniformly applicable within designated historic districts [e.g., the two historic district overlay zones] and landmark districts [e.g., the downtown historic commercial landmark district], and to subsequently designated landmarks, if any, except as specifically provided herein. The provisions hereof shall apply to both contributing and noncontributing buildings and sites and to new construction for projects located within designated historic overlay zones and to designated landmarks wherever located within the city; provided, the standards of this chapter shall not apply to single-family residences, whether within or without a landmark district, unless the residence has been specifically nominated and designated as a landmark.*

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. A Type 1 permit is required to change the exterior paint color using approved colors in the color palette; however, a Type 2 Variance permit is required if businesses opt to utilize a different color that is not on the approved exterior color palette.

#### 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. Planning Commission discussed concerns, provided feedback, and asked additional questions.

Based on this engagement with Planning Commission and downtown businessowners, City staff did additional research on other cities around Washington and presented color palette options to the Planning Commission on April 7, 2025. City staff also presented potential options for updating the color palette and posed several questions for discussion. A local businessowner interested in painting her art studio a brighter color was also present and provided public comment and feedback, along with the Planning Commission Council Liaison, Councilmember Johnson. In addition, Nicole Wiebe, Community Liaison, was present and voiced the concerns expressed by downtown businessowners.

The Planning Commission like the City of Orting's example because it kept strict options rather than a range of dark saturated colors, neutral tones, etc. like other cities like Burien, Carnation, and Gig Harbor. They also wanted to avoid excessively bright colors like neon colors, including as trim or accent colors.

Based on this feedback, City staff researched historic paint color options based on the two cities that have strict color standards. This included the City of Orting and the City of Port Townsend, which use select colors from the Sherwin Williams Historical Color Collection and the Benjamin Moore Historical Color Collection respectively.

On April 21, 2025, staff provided the Planning Commission a wide range of colors from the two historic paint collections mentioned above. The Planning Commission was dissatisfied with the wide range of colors and instructed staff to return with 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).

Based on the public comment we received from Richard Anderson who sits on both the King County and Snoqualmie Landmarks Commissions (see attachment 3) and additional input from King County Historic Preservation, staff feel that it is in the best interest of the city to not require any color requirements to contributing buildings in the Landmark District nor any individual Landmarks throughout the city. The Snoqualmie Landmarks Commission would be the best authority on appropriate color for these buildings, and there may be situations where the natural materials (like brick) or the actual historic paint color would be a better fit.

If the Planning Commission still wants the downtown to have a set color palette, it could be better to only include buildings in the Overlay Zones and potentially any non-contributing buildings in the Landmark District.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Depending on feedback from the Planning Commission, staff will prepare an updated color palette exhibit and bring it back to Planning Commission for a public hearing. 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." After the public hearing, the color palette will be forwarded to the Community Development Committee and later the City Council.

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

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Sherwin-Williams color palette option
2. Existing Snoqualmie color palette
3. Public comment from April 21, 2025 Planning Commission meeting