




**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services   
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance – Extending a temporary moratorium on the nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts within residential areas – February 25, 2025  
**DATE:** February 11, 2025

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

An ordinance extending an existing temporary moratorium on the nomination and designation of Historic Special Review Districts for a period of six months, to end November 5, 2025.

**BACKGROUND:**

**This Department’s Recommendation is Based On:**

On November 15, 2023, the Planning Commission, in response to Resolution No. 41226, voted to recommend the City Council establish a moratorium on the consideration and adoption of new local historic special review districts for a period of one year, and that the moratorium should terminate following the adoption of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan and Code Amendment package.

The City Council subsequently established the moratorium under Amended Ordinance No. 28962 on April 23, 2024, with an effective date of May 5, 2024 until May 5, 2025. The proposal would extend the existing moratorium until November 5, 2025, to complete the 2024-2025 Comprehensive Plan and accompanying regulatory code amendments.

On December 20, 2024, the Washington State Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) overturned Amended Ordinance No. 28962, finding that the City’s adopted workplan did not provide sufficient detail to meet the requirements of RCW 36.70A.390. The City has until March 12, 2025, to provide a revised workplan.

In addition, the policy and code work is currently underway but will not be concluded before the termination date of May 5, 2025. There are three principal components of this effort:

1. Historic preservation policy review and update, currently underway as a part of the comprehensive plan amendment process, which is scheduled to be considered by City Council in June 2025
2. Historic preservation incentives study, intended to identify potential improvements to incentive programs that encourage historic preservation, which is also currently underway and scheduled to conclude in March 2025
3. Historic preservation code amendments, which will include proposed amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) in response to the updated Comprehensive Plan (focusing on the process for creation of new local historic district overlay zones), scheduled to conclude in October 2025

Both the GMHB decision and the current review schedule for the required amendments necessitates revisions to the workplan, which was approved by the Planning Commission on January 15, 2025. That document is attached as an exhibit.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

This issue has been extensively discussed at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Planning Commission and City Council and was subject of a previous City Council public hearing on March 5, 2024. On February 11, 2025, the City Council conducted a public hearing to receive comment on the proposed extension.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: (Mandatory)**

The recommendations from the Landmarks Preservation Commission are intended to address equity issues, and includes the following language:

“A. The Historic Comprehensive Plan Element and associated regulatory codes should be reviewed during the next code and policy amendment process to assess and evaluate compatibility with the broad City policy of objectives concerning diversity, equity and inclusion, to identify barriers, gaps in preservation policy, and criteria used by the Commission, and to identify additional tools and incentives for owners and residents of historic properties.”

Similarly, the Planning Commission identified a need to incorporate equity goals into this review and designation process. Their recommendation includes:

“The Planning Commission recommends that Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to historic districts be reviewed [and] amended at the earliest appropriate amendment cycle, to include review of consistencies between historic preservation policies and policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan relating to housing, equity, and sustainability.”

**Civic Engagement: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity**

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Livability: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity**

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

Historic preservation honors the legacy of Tacoma and adds character to neighborhoods, improving perception and overall quality of life. However, preserving history should be complementary to equity access to housing options throughout the city. Both the Planning and Landmarks Preservation Commissions have communicated a need to review code language, and the moratorium was established in response. The work requested is still underway.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. No action.	Maintain maximum flexibility for applicants to Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts.	The moratorium will expire, potentially resulting in staff time and resources into a process that Commissioners have already requested we change; review of submittals under current regulations

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

The recommendation for a moratorium includes a timeline that will conclude with the adoption of new policies and regulations under the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Package. Action by the City Council on the amendment package should address the majority of concerns identified during recent historic district reviews by the respective commissions.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the City Council approve an ordinance extending the existing temporary moratorium on the nomination and designation of Historic Special Review Districts for a period of six months, to end November 5, 2025.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact related to extending the moratorium.

**ATTACHMENT:**

- Revised Workplan