



Allyson Brooks Ph.D., Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

May 24, 2018

Ms. Judith Bardin, ScD, MS, BSN
1517 Dickinson Avenue NW
Olympia, WA 98502
judybardin@comcast.net

In future correspondence please refer to:
Project Tracking Code: 2018-05-03347
Re: Missing Middle Housing Code Amendments, City of Olympia

Dear Ms. Bardin:

Thank you for letter of April 20, 2018 to Washington State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) Dr. Allyson Brooks regarding the "Missing Middle" Housing Code Amendments proposal from the City of Olympia. As a result of her busy schedule, Dr. Brooks referred your letter to myself to review and respond.

In your letter, you make two requests:

- 1) A review of the Missing Middle proposal and consider whether it may affect future designations of the affected neighborhoods for listing on a National Registered Historic District; and
- 2) Evaluate the SEPA checklist to see if historic and cultural considerations have been adequately addressed.

In response to your first question, our summary answer, (which is only a "best guess") is that the Missing Middle proposal would have minimal effect on future designations of National Register Historic Districts. The basis for this response is our understanding that the proposal would not result in any change to how historic properties are currently nominated, designated, and regulated under City code. Olympia has enacted one of the stronger and more comprehensive historic preservation ordinances in comparison to preservation statutes of similarly sized jurisdictions in Washington. We believe the protection to designated historic properties and archaeological resources as provided for in OMC 18.12.000 is key to minimizing effects of proposals on historic district designations and subsequent proposals that may affect historic character.

Discussion: There are several complex issues that could enter into this discussion that makes it difficult to expand upon in our letter. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this discussion, we extend the question to address future designations of locally designated historic districts, since two historic districts coincide with local historic district boundaries such as South Capitol neighborhood and Downtown.



An important point to keep in mind is that listing a property in the National Register of Historic Places and/or the Washington Heritage Register is an ***honorary*** recognition. A listing in either or both Registers does not restrict owners of privately-owned property nor places any obligation on private property owners to preserve their property. Nor are these properties monitored by DAHP. Exceptions arise when federal or state actions may affect historic properties or when disturbance of an archaeological site requires a permit from DAHP.

In regard to your second question, our opinion is "yes" that the answers to section 13 of the Environmental Checklist are adequately addressed. This opinion is made in view of the recognition that this is a non-project specific proposal and there are no changes proposed to OMC 18.12 and therefore what would be allowed in historic districts and on individually listed properties. In addition, we add the following comments that we think could enhance or clarify the responses in 13 (b) through (d):

- 1) We would recommend that 13 (d) include discussion or clarification about how the proposal would affect "inventoried" historic properties (generally those over 50 years in age) that are not afforded the protection of designated properties and historic districts. We would also recommend information that outlines how/when tribes, DAHP, and other interested parties are notified when applications are received that involve ground disturbance and/or demolition of an inventoried property.
- 2) We also recommend that it would be useful to discuss in 13 (d) or 8 (d) how the "Missing Middle" proposal might affect land values, property values, and market forces that could influence the preservation of, or demolition of both designated as well as inventoried properties. While this discussion would be speculative and beyond the requirements of completing the checklist, it would be interesting to know if there has been any research on this question and/or case studies of similar proposals in other cities. While the checklist does cite research conducted by the Thurston Regional Planning Council on past demolition trends and numbers in the county's urban core, it is not clear if the research tabulated demolished properties that were 50 years of age and older or had any historic designation status or inventory record.
- 3) Finally, we note that while accurate at face value, the statements in b. through d: "Any future development would be subject to city, state, and federal regulations regarding protection of cultural, historic and archaeological resources..." may give the impression to a general audience that these resources are afforded "ironclad" protection as a result of government regulations. In reality, beyond the protections afforded by OMC 18.12, state and federal cultural resource regulations and review processes have limited applicability and authority that are dependent upon project variables such as location, funding source, program, and the cultural resource/historic property type that could be affected.



Ms. Judy Bardin
May 24, 2018
Page Three

Thank you for your letter to the State Historic Preservation Officer. Should you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 360-586-3073 or greg.griffith@dahp.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Gregory Griffith
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

C: Leonard Bauer/Olympia Heritage Commission
Annette Bullchild, Nisqually Tribe, Historic Preservation Office
Rhonda Foster, THPO, Squaxin Island Tribe
Doug Penn, THPO, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
Jackie Wall, Nisqually Tribe, Historic Preservation Office



