

**Town of Lyons, Colorado
PCDC Agenda Cover Sheet
Meeting Date: January 26, 2026**

TO: Members of the Planning and Community Development Commission

FROM: Lisa Ritchie, Planning and Building Director

DATE: January 22, 2026

ITEM: Historic Preservation and Demolition Moratorium Discussion

☐ ORDINANCE
☐ MOTION / RESOLUTION
☒ INFORMATION

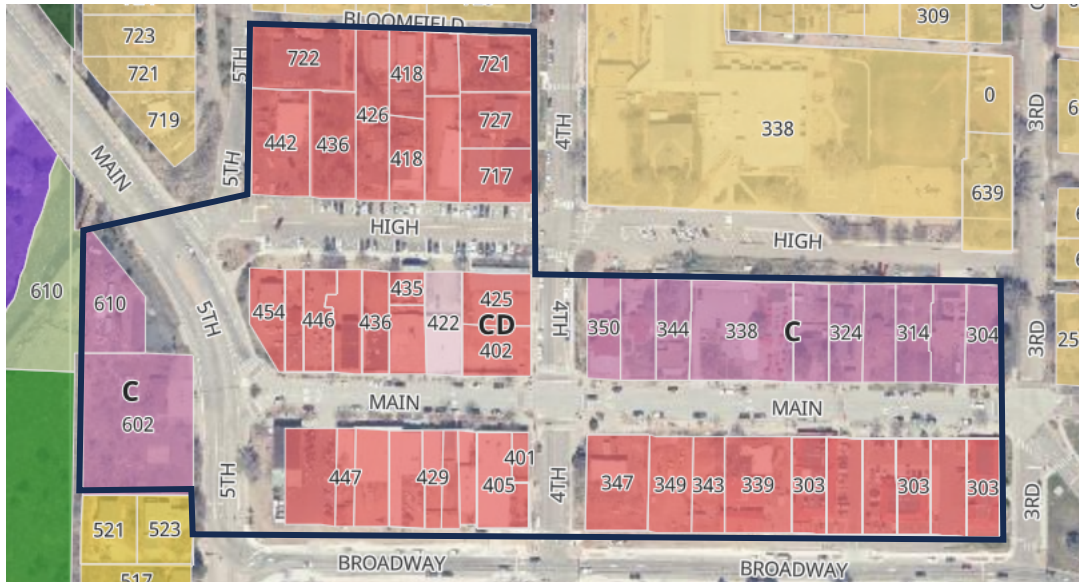
I. REQUEST OR ISSUE:

On August 4, the Board of Trustees adopted Resolution 2025-47, enacting an 8-month moratorium on the issuance of demolition permits in the historic downtown Lyons area. The moratorium was intended to provide time for citizens, commissions, and the Board of Trustees to consider designating certain properties as a historic district or other means of preserving existing structures, as outlined in Chapter 16, Article 12 of the Lyons Municipal Code. This memo will provide an update to PCDC on the latest Board direction and requests feedback on next steps for consideration.

II. PROJECT HISTORY:

Over the past few years, the Town has approved demolition permits for properties downtown due to dangerous conditions and in anticipation of redevelopment. In 2021, the Town adopted Ordinance 1100, which established [Chapter 16, Article 12](#) of the Lyons Municipal Code regarding Historic Preservation. Among other things, this code allows the Town the right to designate certain properties as historic landmarks and designate areas of the town as historic districts. To date, the Town has designated one property, the Depot located at 430 5th Avenue, as a local landmark. The Town has numerous other properties that are designated on the State and/or National Registers. Local designations provide the greatest legal authority for the Town to regulate the demolition or alteration of existing historic structures.

The map below identifies the properties subject to the moratorium



Over the past few months, staff and the Chairs of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), the Economic Vitality Commission (EVC), and the Planning and Community Development Commission (PCDC) met to discuss options to address the concern. Staff and the HPC Chair also met with a representative of History Colorado to discuss various approaches. The options below were presented to the Board for discussion and direction during their [January 5, 2026 \(link to video\)](#) meeting:

- **Option 1:** Require approval of a development plan prior to issuance of a demolition permit or building permit that authorizes changes to the exterior of a structure. This would limit a property owner's ability to demolish a property without demonstrating what any changes to an existing building or new building would look like. This allows the Town to review the changes for consistency with Town codes, historic preservation design principles, local design standards, and other applicable policies and regulations.

This approach is typical for properties that are locally designated or within a designated historic district. Town staff was not able to identify any communities within the State that regulate non-designated properties in this manner.

- **Option 2:** Consider placing a stay of demolition on a historic property, typically between 90 to 180 days, for properties that are deemed likely eligible for local landmarking. This allows staff and/or the HPC to work with the property owner to discuss landmarking, salvage of certain materials, relocation of structures, or preservation of key elements while the stay is in effect. The placement of a stay is typically triggered by an application for demolition or modifications to the exterior of a structure and may be placed by the Town following a public hearing before the HPC or the Board of Trustees.

The rationale for a stay is that the property meets the eligibility criteria for landmarking already within our code, such as 1) distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan, 2) connection with persons or groups significant in history, or 3) geographic importance. Once a stay expires, the property owner may move forward with demolition and is subject to the remainder of Town regulations for development. The neighboring communities of [Lafayette](#), [Louisville](#), [Longmont](#), [Boulder](#), and [Boulder](#)

[County](#) have similar regulations that allow a stay of demolition for properties likely eligible for local landmarking.

- **Option 3:** Develop an incentive-based program to increase protection of historic structures. Incentives could include:
 - No/reduced off-street parking requirements
 - Permit Fee Waiver
 - Use Tax Waiver
 - Promote the use of the revolving loan fund for restoration work
 - Promote availability of tax credits and other benefits of historic preservation
 - More flexibility with desired land uses, i.e., reduce limits on residential uses or short-term rentals
 - Density bonus, i.e., in exchange for the preservation of the front portion of a structure, allows more height/bulk in the rear of the property.

In addition to the three options above, additional policy questions were raised below:

- **Applicable geography:** Staff and the Chairs recommend that the initial scope focus on the historic downtown. This aligns with the Town's most concentrated historic and economic resources. This could be expanded over time to any historic commercial property, or to the entire Town.
- **Definition of demolition:** The Town would need to determine what constitutes a demolition; whether it's the complete removal of a structure, or the alteration of certain exterior components. It is common for communities to regulate alterations to historic structures under these codes, not just the full removal of buildings.
- **Age of applicability:** Historic preservation regulations typically apply to properties 50 years of age or older. Over time, this approach increases the number of properties subject to the code. Alternatively, some communities cap the age to a set year, also called the period of significance, to establish which properties are subject to the code. Staff does not have a recommendation for a period of significance; additional research would be required to determine the appropriate "cut-off".
- **Staff and Commission capacity:** Communities that regulate Option 1 and 2 models typically have staff dedicated to historic preservation who work with property owners. Additionally, there should be a body of readily available research to lean upon to establish the likelihood and basis for local landmarking. While the Town has a part-time staff member (up to 10 hours per week) dedicated to historic preservation, these discussions are typically urgent and require consistent access to resources to be equitable and predictable for property owners. To address concerns related to delays for future development, staff should guarantee meeting times and dates to have the process be as predictable and responsive as possible. This may present challenges for our small staff to implement successfully.
- **Additional research:** HPC plans to apply for a grant to conduct research into historic properties in 2026. This may provide an increased basis of knowledge to rely upon for demolition/landmarking decisions.

III. DISCUSSION:

On January 5, the Board provided direction for staff and the chairs to develop a model that combined elements of Options 2 and 3. This would include a stay of demolition placed for a short period of time, i.e. 30-60 days, to provide the opportunity to discuss historic

preservation, as well as solidify options for incentives for those that elect to pursue preservation as part of their development/redevelopment projects.

Following the January 5 meeting, staff and the chairs of the PCDC, HPC and EVC met to refine a path for consideration. The following draft model is under discussion with all three commissions over the coming weeks for further refinement prior to returning this topic back to the Board later in February or early March.

- Upon application for a demolition permit for a property in the historic downtown area (shown on the map above), an automatic stay is placed on issuance of the permit. The final recommended timeframe will depend on all the actions that would take place during this time, but this discussion assumes a 30 to 60 day stay. The demolition scope which triggers a stay is any work that would affect the exterior of any street facing façade, which may or may not result in the loss of the entire building.
- During the stay, Town staff and a subcommittee of HPC members (no more than two) would meet with the developer to discuss landmarking and the landmarking process, the specific history of the building, salvage of materials or preservation of certain elements, relocation of the building, etc.
- Additionally, staff would provide a list of Board supported incentives that the Town may offer (parking waivers, density, financial, etc) in exchange for preservation. Some incentives may only be available through landmarking while others may be available through other demonstrated commitments, such as a preservation easement or approval of a Development Plan that reflects preserved elements of a structure.
- HPC will offer an optional advisory meeting on the future plans in advance of an application to provide feedback on the proposed design and compatibility and compliance with the Town's design standards and historic preservation best practices.
- The stay will automatically expire at the end of the time period and the developer may move forward at will, in compliance with Town processes and codes in effect.

The HPC and EVC are exploring financial incentives that may be available. Staff requests PCDC discuss possible incentives related to zoning and development that may be appropriate for the downtown area. Typically, these incentives are provided as a measure to reduce development cost and/or add development value in recognition of the value of historic preservation efforts. These could include the following:

Reductions or Elimination of Parking Requirements.

- One possible strategy that the Town could offer is reduction or elimination of off-street parking. The Town code currently requires off-street parking in an amount necessary to serve the proposed use, as established in [Chapter 16, Article 8 of the Lyons Municipal Code](#). Further, the Commercial Design Standards language for parking in the historic downtown includes the following statement:
Parking and Circulation. Parking in the HDT area is limited. Developments in the HDT area should not cause a reduction in the number of available parking spaces and, where practical, should add more parking spaces. Refer to LMC [Section 16-8-90](#) to determine if your development is exempt from off-street parking requirements.

However, the Town code also includes the following exemption language for the area under discussion, but in many instances would still require off-street parking:

The off-street parking standards of this Article shall not apply to a change in use or the creation of a new use for any commercial property fronting upon Main Street between Third Avenue and Fifth Avenue provided that such change in use or new use is a commercial retail use. For purposes of this section, "commercial retail use" shall mean and include any use whose primary or principal activity is the sale of goods, merchandise, or services to the public which sales are subject to state and/or local sales tax. All other uses shall conform to the minimum parking standards of this Article upon change to or creation of to a new use.

Generally, the requirement to build new or maintain existing off-street parking spaces limits the development potential on a lot. Lots in downtown are typically smaller and more urban in scale than the other commercial corridors in town. Lyons is relatively unique in that the typical lots in downtown are “double frontage lots” extending from Main Street to Broadway or Main Street to High Street, rather than having lots that front both streets that are separated by an alley. Most existing off-street parking in the downtown area fronts High Street and Broadway, with primary building frontages oriented towards Main Street.

Over time, with the elimination or reduction of the requirement for off-street parking, the Town may need to prioritize additional measures to manage parking downtown, or build and maintain more parking areas. Town staff has not conducted a parking study following the improvements on Broadway, but it appears that there is an excess of public parking spaces that are able to serve current downtown needs. While this may continue to require that visitors and employees must walk a block or two to their destinations, this is generally an accepted practice in urban areas. Additionally, the Town may want to consider placement of dedicated ADA spaces in targeted locations, work with businesses on communication strategies related to parking, and work with businesses on how to manage parking for special events.

Increasing Development Capacity on a Lot

- Another strategy that may be considered is an allowance for increased height or a reduction in required setbacks in exchange for preservation efforts on existing structures. Currently, the code includes the following for the downtown zone districts (shown in the map above):

| Standard | Commercial Downtown (CD) | Commercial (C) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Maximum height | 40' | 40' |
| Minimum setbacks | | |
| Front | 0' | 25' |
| Side | 0' | 0' |
| Side abutting residential | 0' | 3x height of proposed structure |
| Rear | 0' | 25' |
| Rear abutting residential | 25' | 3x height of proposed structure |

The Design Standards include the following language related to building height:

The design model for the HDT area is buildings with one- to two-story height, with the first floor designed for pedestrian-oriented retail and activity generating uses and upper stories available for residential, office, or commercial use. Where practical, upper floors will generally be differentiated from first floor designs. Designs for three-story structures will be considered based on acceptance by the Lyons Regional Fire District of its fire safety and emergency services assessment.

Staff acknowledges that additional building height may be contradictory with adopted design standards and desired character for downtown. However, allowing more flexibility for portions of a structure to have additional height in certain instances may be acceptable. For example, additional height may be appropriate for structures that have frontage along Broadway. Because the topography drops between Main and Broadway, this would allow building heights to maintain a two-story presence along Main, with additional capacity at the rear.

Setback reductions may be appropriate for historic preservation incentives, particularly the front setback for the commercial zoned properties, and the rear and side setback if the building is one or two-stories in height.

Additional Flexibility on Permitted Uses.

The Town may wish to consider additional flexibility on permitted uses in exchange for historic preservation efforts. For example, the Commercial Downtown district allows residential development, but only if a business fronts the street. Further, the Commercial district only allows residential uses if it is associated with a permitted commercial use.

Another use that is more restricted in the downtown area are short-term rentals, which are only permitted when a business is also operational on the property.

Finally, staff seeks input from the PCDC on additional areas of zoning flexibility that could be used to incentivize historic preservation efforts that may be effective in Lyons.

IV. RECOMMENDED ACTION / NEXT STEPS:

Staff requests the PCDC provide input on the draft proposal for a stay of demolition, and the associated zoning incentives that may be appropriate for Lyons.

V. FISCAL IMPACTS:

Unknown

VI. LEGAL ISSUES:

The Town has the legal authority to enact additional historic preservation regulations.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution 2025-47