



City of Stevenson

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October 2025 Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, October 13, 2025

6:00 PM

A. Preliminary Matters

1. **Public Comment Expectations:** Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84522187605>
Conference Call: +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 ID #: 845 2218 7605

Commenters must raise their hand and be acknowledged by the Chair. Individual comments may be cut off after 3 mins. Disruptive individuals may be required to leave the meeting. Persistent disruptions may result in the meeting being recessed and continued at a later date.

Tools: *6 to mute/unmute & *9 to raise hand

2. **Public Comment Period:** (For items not located elsewhere on the agenda)
3. **Minutes:** September 8, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

B. New Business

4. **Vacation Rental Discussion:** Review working paper and discuss next steps and timeline.

C. Old Business

D. Discussion

E. Adjournment

DRAFT Minutes
Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting
Monday, September 8, 2025
6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Planning Commission Chair Jeff Breckel;
Commissioner Auguste Zettler, Commissioner Anne
Keesee.**

STAFF PRESENT: **Community Development Director Ben Shumaker,
Planning & Public Works Assistant Tiffany Andersen**

PUBLIC PRESENT: Mary Repar

GUESTS: Cheryl Carrington

Planning Commission Chair Jeff Breckel called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. A quorum was in attendance.

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations At the request of **PC Chair Breckel, Community Development Director Shumaker** shared the following information: He noted the Planning Commission provides an inclusive meeting. Commenters must raise their hand and be acknowledged by the Chair. Speakers must provide their name for recording in the minutes. Individual comments may be cut off after 3 minutes. Disruptive individuals may be required to leave the meeting. Persistent disruptions may result in the meeting being recessed and continued at a later date. For remote participants, the tools to use are *6 to mute/unmute & *9 to raise hand.

2. Public Comment Period: Mary Repar spoke about a upcoming events, the high curbs along certain streets in Stevenson, recent articles provided by **Ben Shumaker**, and the need for more work addressing affordable housing.

3. Approval of Minutes: Prior to the action **Commissioner Keesee** requested information on the Planning Commission's new short-term rental housing/vacation rental sub-committee be sent to her.
August 11th, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes were approved unanimously following a motion

by **Commissioner Zettler** seconded by **Commissioner Keese**. There were no changes or corrections.

B. New Business

4. Zoning Interpretation:

Contemplating Public, Private or Parochial Schools in the PR/Public Use & Recreation District

The Stevenson Planning Commission was asked to interpret the Zoning Code based on the applicant's request in Attachment 1 to open and operate a private school for children in grades K-2 at a local county owned site. In conducting this interpretation, the Planning Commission is constrained by the process and standards of SMC 17.12.020.

The Planning Commission's interpretation can-

- a) prohibit;
- b) allow staff review/approval as an accessory use; or
- c) allow Planning Commission review/approval via a conditional use permit.

A staff memo addressed Public, Private or Parochial School as an unlisted use in the PR Public Use & Recreation District. The Planning Commission was asked to evaluate this proposal based on its understanding of a) whether the Public, Private or Parochial School use is consistent with the purpose of the PR District and; b) whether the use is expressly permitted in less restrictive districts.

A draft interpretation was attached based on the assumption that the Public, Private or Parochial School use could be conditionally allowed in the PR District. A second draft interpretation was provided if the Planning Commission believes it can be allowed as an Accessory Use to instant principal uses in the district. Approval standards are in place.

Ben Shumaker, Community Development Director, noted the information in the staff report explained the options before the Commission.

A detailed discussion took place. A number of points were raised on protecting the use of public recreational spaces. **Commissioner Zettler** suggested any approval should ensure no new structures are to be built or installed at the site. **Shumaker** provided additional restrictions are in place due to the site being in close proximity to water body edges.

Prior to the motion it was determined a fourth finding would be added regarding the appropriate use of an

existing building which would not interfere or detract from public use.

Findings

Based on the discussion, the following findings were made:

- 1) The Professional Services use is consistent with the purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District.
- 2) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district than the PR District.
- 3) The Public, Private or Parochial School use is not customarily incidental to permitted instant principal uses in the PR District.
- 4) This is an appropriate use of an existing building that will not interfere or detract from public use.

MOTION to amend Planning Commission Interpretation Public Use & Recreation District—Public, Private or Parochial School (ZON2025-01A) to state this interpretation is considered a conditional use to adaptively reuse an existing structure without detracting or interfering with public use was made by **Commissioner Zettler**, seconded by **Commissioner Keesee**.

Voting aye: **Commissioners Breckel, Keesee, Zettler**.

5. Zoning Interpretation

Contemplating Personal Services uses in the R1 Single-Family Residential District.

The Stevenson Planning Commission was asked to interpret the Zoning Code based on the applicant's request in Attachment 1 to operate a sauna business on her property.

In conducting this interpretation, the Planning Commission is constrained by the process and standards of SMC 17.12.020. The Planning Commission's interpretation can-

- a) prohibit;
- b) allow staff review/approval as an accessory use; or
- c) allow Planning Commission review/approval via a conditional use permit.

The memo analyzed the request in 2 ways. More conservatively, it dealt with "Day Spa" as an unlisted use in the Zoning Code generally. More permissively, it dealt

with Personal Services as an unlisted use in the R1 Single- Family Residential District.

Shumaker provided background information on the request. There are two different categories of personal services under current codes. There is no zoning amendment required through this process, but this interpretation and the one prior on private schools will be noted for review when the next round of zoning amendments comes before the Planning Commission.

Following a discussion on the proposal details, it was determined the use of a dedicated structure in a Single Family Residential zone for business purposes was not in keeping with the intent of that particular zoning criteria.

Shumaker noted changes to Planning Commission Interpretation Single-family Residential District— Personal Services (Day Spa) (ZON2025-02A). The changes included removing #'s 2,3, and 4 from the Findings, and amending Finding #1 to read personal service use is inconsistent with the purpose of the R1C residential district and no further analysis is necessary. In the R1 single-family residential district, the personal services use does not satisfy the criteria of SMC 17.12.020. As a result, the use is prohibited in the district.

MOTION to adopt Planning Commission Interpretation A as amended was made by **Commissioner Zettler**, seconded by **Commissioner Keesee**.

Voting aye: **Commissioners Breckel, Keesee, Zettler**.

C. Old Business

6. Vacation Rental Strategy:

Commissioners reviewed and discussed the ad hoc sub-committee report on potential policies and tools to employ related to vacation rental homes. It was determined by the sub-committee the licensing of short-term rental properties was outside of the land use zoning tasks the Planning Commission is responsible for.

The following recommendations for action were made by the sub-committee:

- Planning Commission to recommend Policy Intents and Regulatory Tools to City Council
- City Council to review and accept or alter Planning Commission recommendations

- Staff to develop code language based on City Council direction
- Planning Commission review and recommendation of code language
- City Council action on Planning Commission recommendations

Gaining broader public input on the issue was seen as critical to finding solutions to the short-term rental questions and concerns being raised by some community members.

D. Discussion

6. Thought of the Month:

-Housing - The Abundance Movement:
<https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/knowledge-hub/news/smart-growth-the-abundance-we-need/>

7. Staff & Commission Reports

Community Development Director Shumaker provided updates on paving projects along Railroad, Seymour and Ash Alley, and re-striping along Russell Avenue.

E. Adjournment

Following a motion by **Commissioner Zettler**, seconded by **Commissioner Keesee**, **Planning Commission Chair Breckel** declared the meeting adjourned 7:40 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe

Background

The City's current vacation rental program was enacted in 2016. The program is composed of an annual licensing requirement, a registry, self-certification of consistency with 10 regulatory measures, and complaint-based enforcement mechanisms.

In April 2025, the City Council received a request from members of the public to revise this program. The request voiced concern over the impact of vacation rentals on the nature and character of the City's residential neighborhoods and suggested adding greater restrictions and new enforcement mechanisms.

The City Council referred the policy review and analysis to the Planning Commission. In May 2025, the Planning Commission initiated the review and established its public involvement expectations. Those expectations involved an unbiased solicitation of public feedback via a listening session. The listening session was held in August 2025. While sparsely attended, the listening session involved diverse perspectives and thoughtful conversation between Planning Commissioners and the interested public.

The Planning Commission accepted the attendance as appropriate for the initial stage of the policy development and anticipates more involvement as draft policies and regulations are developed. In August 2025, the Planning Commission requested staff to collect data regarding raw numbers and trends in vacation rental licensing under the current program. In addition, an ad hoc subcommittee of 2 Planning Commissioners met with City staff to develop initial recommendations for consideration. This was followed by a second meeting of 2 Planning Commissioners and staff to further refine the recommendations and discuss further public involvement. This report discusses the Planning Commission's findings regarding the current vacation rental program, possible changes to the program, and plans for engaging the public to develop a formal proposal for consideration the City Council.

Current Vacation Rental Licensing Program

In establishing the current vacation rental licensing program, the City recognized that rental of dwellings for a period less than thirty days contributes to the City's comprehensive plan's tourism goal. However, it also recognizes that the use has the potential to be incompatible with surrounding or adjacent residential uses. The city vacation rental regulations (Chapter 5.20) are intended to ensure that this use will:

- Benefit the local economy;
- Reduce administrative burdens and barriers to entry;
- Ensure market fairness and taxation;
- Protect guests; and

- Avoid unchecked neighborhood disruptions.

The ordinance's key provisions are summarized below.

- An annual license and fee are required for the operation of vacation rental;
- A license may be renewed provided the applicable standards of the ordinance have been met.
- A license may be revoked for failure to comply with the provisions of the ordinance.
- An annual notice must be provided to all property owners and/or occupants of adjacent properties advising them how to contact the owner or operator of the vacation rental.
- The owner of a vacation rental need not be a permanent resident, but must have a local contact person to represent the owner.
- The owner or contact person must respond to concerns or complaints in a reasonably timely manner and should maintain a complaint log.
- Vacation rentals are subject to city inspection to ensure to determine conformance with the Vacation Rental Fire Safety Checklist. It is the owner's responsibility to compliance with the fire safety checklist and remains in substantial compliance with all other applicable fire, building and safety codes.
- The owner is responsible for all applicable tax reporting and payments and must maintain liability insurance which expressly covers the use of the dwelling unit as a vacation rental.

Vacation Rental Policy Review

The Planning Commission's review of the current vacation rental ordinance focused on the following factors:

- The loss of neighborhood character and livability should residential areas become oversaturated with vacation or short-term rentals
- The reduction in housing available to meet long-term residential needs
- The need to assure vacation rentals meet basic fire and safety standards
- The spotty compliance with current requirements
- The need to simplify and focus regulations on the most critical needs, and improve the ease of administration.

The current vacation rental ordinance effectively allows a commercial tourist lodging in residential zones provided certain conditions are satisfied. It does not limit the number, density, or location of vacation rental units. It does not limit the number of vacation rental units owned or operated by an individual or business. Moreover, owners and operators of vacation rentals do not need to be resident of the city.

Members of the public have voiced concern that the uncontrolled growth of vacation rentals could reduce the availability of housing needed for permanent or long-term residents and that constantly changing short-term tenants and vacancy periods could adversely affect the character and livability neighborhoods.

In 2025, there were 9 fully and 14 partially licensed vacation rentals in the city. This represents approximately 2.5 percent of the city's single family housing stock. The fully licensed rentals had paid the license fee and satisfied the various administrative requirements. The partially licensed rentals had paid the license fee only. This situation may be attributable in part to the fact that license fees are paid through the Washington State Department of Revenue Business Licensing Service and not directly to the city.

The focus of the current ordinance is primarily ensuring vacation rentals (a commercial use) are conducted in a manner compatible with the nature and character of the city's residential neighborhoods. Unlike other types of commercial lodging, this places unique burden on city staff to conduct inspections and ensure compliance with ordinance's requirements. This demand on staff time and resources may also contribute to the lack of full compliance with the ordinance.

One the key objectives is to ensure that the operation of vacation rentals protects the safety of tenants by requiring compliance with Vacation Rental Fire Safety Checklist and the "substantial compliance with all applicable fire, building, and safety codes." It is not clear that the city has a fire safety checklist, nor is it clear what the applicable fire, building, and safety codes are.

Vacation Rental Policy Recommendations

Based on public input and our review of the current vacation rental ordinance, the Planning Commission recommends consideration of the following updates and revisions:

- A **numerical cap** on the total number of units that can be granted licenses, based on consideration of the current number and the objective of keeping total below about 5% or a fixed number of total housing units in the city.
- New and subsequent licensees must have their **primary residence** in the City of Stevenson.
- Existing **non-resident owners** would be grandfathered if registered within 90 days of the effective date of the revised ordinance and maintain a valid license.
- **Two units** per resident, one being with within the home of a resident or an associated Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU) and the second being a separate residence.
- Annual licenses are **non-transferable**.
- Licenses specify **occupancy limits**.

- **Fire and building safety inspections** are the responsibility of the owner, not the city. The owner utilizes clearly specified inspection standards and requirements and a list of locally available inspectors.
- Ongoing **owner management requirements** to include prompt response to complaints, notice to adjacent property owners, and tenant use and behavior requirements.
- **Enforcement measures**, including fines and license revocation.

Next Steps

If the City Council concurs, the Planning Commissions proposes reaching out to city residents to discuss the possible updates and revisions to the vacation rental ordinance. This outreach could include a public workshop, a mailing to residential home owners, postings on the city website and Facebook page, and publication in the newspaper.

Using the public feedback, the Planning Commission would work with the city staff and attorney to propose specific ordinance language for City Council consideration.