



City of Stevenson

Phone (509) 427-5970

Fax (509) 427-8202

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371

Stevenson, Washington 98648

September 2025 Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, September 08, 2025

6:00 PM

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations:

In Person: Attendees at City Hall should follow current CDC and State guidance regarding use of masks, social distancing, and attendance.

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: August 11, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

B. New Business

4. Zoning Interpretation: Contemplating Public, Private or Parochial Schools in the PR Public Use & Recreation District

5. Zoning Interpretation: Contemplating Personal Services uses in the R1 Single-Family Residential District.

C. Old Business

- 6. Vacation Rental Strategy:** Review subcommittee report on potential policies and tools to employ related to vacation rental homes.

D. Discussion

- 7. Thought of the Month:**

-Housing - The Abundance Movement:

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

- 8. Staff & Commission Reports:** Downtown resurfacing, Russell Avenue Restriping

E. Adjournment

DRAFT Minutes
Stevenson Planning Commission Meeting
Monday, August 11, 2025
6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Planning Commission Chair Jeff Breckel;
Councilmembers Auguste Zettler, Anthony Lawson,
Charles Hales. Commissioner Keesee was not in attendance.

STAFF PRESENT

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker,
Planning & Public Works Assistant Tiffany Andersen

PUBLIC PRESENT

Cheryl Adams, Kelly O'Malley-McKee, Greg Felton, Thad Roth

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Public Comment Expectations

Shumaker explained use of tools for remote and public participants: For remote, *6 to mute/unmute & *9 to raise hand or raise hand icon. Commenters must raise their hand and be acknowledged by the Chair. Individual comments may be limited to 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.

2. Public Comment Period:

No comments were received

3. Approval of Minutes:

May 12th, 2025, Planning Commission meeting minutes were approved unanimously following a motion by **Commissioner Lawson**, seconded by **Commissioner Hales**. There were no changes or corrections.

B. New Business

None presented

C. Old Business

4. Vacation Rental Listening Session:

The intent was to collect public impressions of the current program

Planning Commission Chair Breckel recounted the purpose behind reviewing the vacation rental policy. The May 2025 Planning Commission meeting heard concerns some residents had on the number of houses being used as vacation rentals in Stevenson neighborhoods. At the time it was determined the actual number of rentals was unknown, and directions were given to gather more data.

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker and **Commissioner Hales** related they had developed a public input survey regarding vacation and short-term rentals (STR). Responses, pros and cons, included suggestions to modify the current system. Minimizing neighborhood disruptions, lessening housing speculation, reducing vacation rentals, ensuring market fairness, protecting guests, lowering the administrative burden of licenses, and economic benefits of STR's were among the comments submitted.

Planning & Public Works Assistant Tiffany Andersen relayed just 11 vacation rental sites had paid all fees and completed documentation for the city. Another 27 have not. She noted the rules and timelines are not clear. When the State of Washington changed how business licensing was processed, the city lost the ability to track local business applications.

Further discussion followed. Site safety inspections, clarification of documentation for applicants, enforcement of current regulations, and requiring a level of local owner occupancy were topics considered. Developing policies and basic regulatory approaches to preserve housing availability and maintain neighborhood characteristics was also contemplated. Cheryl Adams, Kelly O'Malley McKee, Greg Felton and Thad Roth provided comments during the discussion onsite inspections, local ownership of STR's, future regulations, and lodging options now available in Stevenson.

It was determined additional feedback was needed. **Commissioner Zettler** advised that any language intended to change zoning codes be addressed in a deliberate way.

Commissioners Lawson and **Hales** agreed to work on developing a concept document in order to invite further public input and present it at the September 2025 PC meeting.

5. Land Division Code Review:

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker explained several potential amendments intended to clean-up and modernize the Land Division Code. He pointed out several outdated and inconsistent land use rules that create frustration for applicants. **PC Chair Breckel** requested the amendments be added to upcoming agendas for review.

D. Discussion

6. Thought of the Month:

-Housing Price Dynamics:

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2025/7/21/what-happens-when-housing-prices-go-down-because-they-are>

7. Staff & Commission Reports

Community Development Director Ben Shumaker provided updates on the recently approved sewer ordinance, the Cascade Avenue project, and finalization of the Sewer System upgrades. He noted further updates on water projects would be presented in September.

E. Adjournment

Following a motion by **Commissioner Lawson**, seconded by **Commissioner Zettler, Planning Commission Chair Breckel** declared the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Johanna Roe



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Ben Shumaker
DATE: September 8th, 2025
SUBJECT: Zoning Interpretation – Public, Private or Parochial School in the PR Public Use & Recreation District

Introduction

The Stevenson Planning Commission is asked to interpret the Zoning Code based on the request in Attachment 1. 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.

This memo addresses Public, Private or Parochial School as an unlisted use in the PR Public Use & Recreation District.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission should 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) and whether the use is expressly permitted in less restrictive districts. A draft interpretation is 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 is provided if the Planning Commission believes it can be allowed as an A – Accessory Use to instant principal uses in the district.

Approval Standards

Affirmative findings shall be made on the following criteria before any unlisted use is allowed in a zoning district.

1. The use (Public, Private or Parochial School) is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district (PR Public Use & Recreation);

GUIDANCE: Staff sees nothing to prevent an affirmative finding by the Planning Commission.

Use: The City lists Public, Private or Parochial School in its use descriptions at SMC 17.13.060:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The City has stated the purpose of the district is as follows:

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

AND

2. The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED, CR, C1, and M1 Districts);

GUIDANCE: An affirmative finding is appropriate for this criterion.

District Allowances: The Public, Private, or Parochial School use is expressly allowed as a P – Permitted use in the ED District.

OR

3. The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district.

GUIDANCE: The Planning Commission needn't consider this criterion as a result of the analysis above.

Accessory Use, Supplemental Standard

In limited circumstances, an unlisted use which satisfies the approval standards above may be interpreted as an accessory use in the district under consideration. Such circumstances require an additional affirmative finding that:

1. The proposed use (Public, Private, or Parochial School) serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use (see below) on the property under consideration.

GUIDANCE: Staff is hard-pressed to recommend an affirmative finding for this criterion.

Instant Principal Use: Staff will caution (repeatedly) to avoid discussion of a specific site and/or property while making a decision on this interpretation which must be viewed through a district-wide lens. The instant principal uses on the property involve Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P).

Prepared by,

Ben Shumaker
Community Development Director

Attachment

- Request for Interpretation
- Draft Interpretations (ZON2025-01A, ZON2025-01B)



School at the Fairgrounds

Alex Hays <hays@co.skamania.wa.us>
To: Ben Shumaker <ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 3:27 PM

Hey Ben, Thank you for talking to me and such a quick response as I know you're a busy guy. You are correct. She is looking to provide a private school setting for K-2nd grade kids. They will be using a portion (Dance Studio) of the Exhibit Hall for arts and crafts and general learning. We intend, if approved to lease the space to her. I have the link to her website. She unfortunately has jumped the gun a bit and thought that she could begin September 4th. I have informed her of our conversation. When will the planning commission meet and can she attend to answer any questions?

All the best,

Alex Hays

Community Events Program Manager

Skamania County Community Events & Recreation

[710 SW Rock Creek Drive](#)

PO BOX 369

Stevenson, WA 98648

hays@co.skamania.wa.us Email

www.skamaniacounty.org Web

509.427.3978 Office

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 7:30am - 5:30pm

From: Ben Shumaker <ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Sent: Monday, August 25, 2025 2:20 PM

To: Alex Hays <hays@co.skamania.wa.us>

Subject: School at the Fairgrounds

**** WARNING:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. **

[Quoted text hidden]



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

Planning Commission Interpretation

Public Use & Recreation District—Public, Private or Parochial School (ZON2025-01A)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.35.040 did not contemplate whether Public, Private or Parochial School uses would be compatible in the PR Public Use & Recreation District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND

- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND

- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Public, Private or Parochial School use has the following description in SMC Chapter 17.13:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District is listed at SMC 17.35.020(A):

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate

existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

District Allowances: This use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED Education).

Character of Uses: [Analysis unnecessary.]

Instant Principal Use: The suite of uses allowed in the PR District (including Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P)) does not involve uses to which a Public, Private or Parochial School is customarily incidental.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are 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.

Interpretation:

In the PR Public Use & Recreation District, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1 & 2). As a result, the use may be allowed anywhere in the district upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

Planning Commission Interpretation

Public Use & Recreation District—Public, Private or Parochial School (ZON2025-01B)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.35.040 did not contemplate whether Public, Private or Parochial School uses would be compatible in the PR Public Use & Recreation District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND

- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND

- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Public, Private or Parochial School use has the following description in SMC Chapter 17.13:

Any publicly-, privately-, or parochially-financed school or facility carrying on a program from kindergarten through the 12th grade or any part thereof including vocational education courses otherwise permitted by law. Public, private, or parochial school does not mean a private residence in which instruction is provided to the occupants' own children and 3 or fewer nonresident children or a school support facility as described below.

Zoning District: The purpose of the PR Public Use & Recreation District is listed at SMC 17.35.020(A):

PR Public Use and Recreation District. The public use and recreation District (PR) is intended to designate a central city area to accommodate

existing uses, to minimize possible conflicts of use and to maintain and conserve the environmental qualities of the Rock Creek Pond area.

District Allowances: This use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (ED Education).

Character of Uses: [Analysis unnecessary.]

Instant Principal Use: The suite of uses allowed in the PR District includes Campground (P), Utility or Communication Facility (P), County Fairgrounds (P), Government Administration Building (P), and Community Service Building (P). A Public, Private or Parochial School is customarily incidental to such uses.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are 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 customarily incidental to permitted instant principal uses in the PR District.

Interpretation:

In the PR Public Use & Recreation District, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1 & 2). As a result, the use may be allowed anywhere in the district upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit. Furthermore, when proposed on property where the instant principal use is Campground, Utility or Communication Facility, County Fairgrounds, Government Administration Building, or Community Service Building, the Public, Private or Parochial School use satisfies the criterion of SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) and may be allowed by the Zoning Administrator as an Accessory Use.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Ben Shumaker
DATE: September 8th, 2025
SUBJECT: Zoning Interpretation – Personal Services in the R1 Single-Family Residential District

Introduction

The Stevenson Planning Commission is asked to interpret the Zoning Code based on the request in Attachment 1. 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.

This memo analyzes the request in 2 ways. More conservatively, it deals with "Day Spa" as an unlisted use in the Zoning Code generally. More permissively, it deals with Personal Services as an unlisted use in the R1 Single-Family Residential District.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission should evaluate this proposal based on how wide it wants to open the door to any type of Personal Services in the R1 Single-family Residential District.

In both cases it should evaluate its understanding of a) whether Personal Services or Personal Services (Day Spas) are consistent with the purpose of the R1 District and b) and whether the use is of the same general character as other uses in the district. Draft interpretations are attached based on the assumption that either approach could occur.

Use Descriptions

Stevenson Municipal Code Table [17.13.020-1](#) describes Personal Services as a different suite of uses from other commercial uses (e.g., retail, professional office, and food service, etc.). The abridged table is below along with a working description for Day Spa, should the Planning Commission prefer the conservative approach.

Table 17.13.020-1: General Sales or Service Uses		
Use	Description	Reference
...		
9. Personal Services	Commercial establishments providing individual services generally related to personal needs. Unless specifically listed in the district, Personal Services includes all subcategories listed herein.	
a. Recreation Services	A Personal Services use providing services related to recreational amenities, including lessons and tours for such activities as water sports, bicycling, skiing, fishing, photography, camping and hiking.	
b. Salon	A Personal Services use providing services related to barbering, hair styling, or the cosmetic arts (e.g., makeup, skin care).	
c. Day Spa	A Personal Services use providing services related to bodily relaxation, rejuvenation, or restoration. Examples include massage, hydrotherapy, facials, wet or dry saunas, steam rooms, float tanks, etc.	

Approval Standards

Affirmative findings shall be made on the following criteria before any unlisted use is allowed in a zoning district.

1. The use (Personal Services or Personal Services (Day Spa)) is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district (R1 Single-family Residential);

GUIDANCE: Staff sees nothing to prevent an affirmative finding by the Planning Commission.

Use: See description of Personal Services and operating description of Day Spa, above.

Zoning District: The City has stated the purpose of the district is as follows:

R1 Single-Family Residential District. The single-family residential district (R1) is intended to provide minimum development standards for residential uses where complete community services are available and where residential uses are separated from uses characteristic of more urban and/or rural areas.

AND

2. The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (R2, R3, MHR, SR, PR, ED, CR, C1, and M1 Districts);

GUIDANCE: An affirmative finding is appropriate for this criterion when considering Personal Services, broadly, and inappropriate when considering Personal Services (Day Spa).

District Allowances: The Salon subcategory of Personal Services uses is conditionally allowed in the R3 Multi-family Residential District. The Recreational Services subcategory of Personal Services is expressly allowed as a P – Permitted use in the CR District. The broad Personal Services use category is expressly allowed as a P – Permitted use in the C1 District.

OR

3. The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district.

GUIDANCE: Staff sees nothing to prevent an affirmative finding by the Planning Commission.

Character of Uses: The following uses are of the same general character and listed as principal (P) and conditional (C) uses in the district: Ben & Breakfast (C), Hostel (C), Family Day Care Home (P), Mini-Day Care Center (C), Kennel (C).

Accessory Use, Supplemental Standard

In limited circumstances, an unlisted use which satisfies the approval standards above may be interpreted as an accessory use in the district under consideration. Such circumstances require an additional affirmative finding that:

1. The proposed use (Personal Services or Personal Services (Day Spa)) serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use (Vacant) on the property under consideration.

GUIDANCE: An affirmative finding should not be made for this criterion.

Instant Principal Use: Staff will caution (repeatedly) to avoid discussion of a specific site and/or property while making a decision on this interpretation. On a district-wide basis, staff finds it hard to imagine a scenario where Personal Services or Personal Services (Day Spa) could be considered an accessory use to a vacant use.

Prepared by,

Ben Shumaker
Community Development Director

Attachment

- Request for Interpretation
- Draft Interpretations (ZON2025-02A, ZON2025-02B)



Reinterpretation request!

Mali Drexelius <freebirdgoods@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 3, 2025 at 11:39 AM

To: "Ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us" <Ben@ci.stevenson.wa.us>

Hi Ben! Thanks so much for your time today. I think I'm going to explore both options, but I am leaning towards using my own land! Here is my request for reinterpretation!!

My plan would be to park the horse trailer sauna at the top of my property at 460 Kanaka creek. The trailer is about 16x6, so just under 100 square feet. Because it is under 400 square foot, I'm hoping this can be done without a parking spot needed for patrons! The thought would be that folks can rent out the sauna individually for a set amount of time via online booking (up to 4, possibly 6 people, maximum at a time.) If needed, I could install a shower, but would prefer to skip showers and restrooms if allowed! If so, I'd propose to build a small covered area attached to the trailer for an outdoor enclosed shower, still not to exceed the 400sq ft area. My thought was to use an electric sauna with a small power draw, but would a wood stove-operated sauna also be an option? I am open to any and all ideas and feedback! I will contact Skamania County Health to find out standards as well. Let me know if I missed anything or are needing anything else from me! Many many thanks!



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

Planning Commission Interpretation

Single-family Residential District—Personal Services (Day Spa) (ZON2025-02A)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.15.040 did not contemplate whether Personal Services uses would be compatible in the R1 Single-family Residential District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND
- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND
- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Personal Services use has the following description from SMC Chapter 17.13:

Commercial establishments providing individual services generally related to personal needs. Unless specifically listed in the district, Personal Services includes all subcategories listed herein.

Zoning District: The purpose of the R1 Single-family Residential District is listed at SMC 17.15.020(A):

The single-family residential district (R1) is intended to provide minimum development standards for residential uses where complete community services are available and where residential uses are separated from uses characteristic of more urban and/or rural areas.

District Allowances: This use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district (C1 Commercial).

Character of Uses: In the R1 District, 29 uses are either permitted (P) or conditional (C). Personal Services is of the same general character as 5 of those uses [Ben & Breakfast (C), Hostel (C), Family Day Care Home (P), Mini-Day Care Center (C), Kennel (C)].

Instant Principal Use: Vacant properties have no instant principal use. There is no ability for an accessory use to be established where there is no principal use.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are made:

- 1) The Professional Services use is consistent with the purpose of the R1 Single-Family Residential District.
- 2) The Professional Services use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district than the R1 District.
- 3) The Professional Services use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in the R1 District.
- 4) The Professional Services is not customarily incidental to vacant property, which have no instant principal use.

Interpretation:

In the R1 Single-family Residential District, the Professional Services use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1, 2 & 3). As a result, the use may be allowed upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

Planning Commission Interpretation

Single-family Residential District—Personal Services (Day Spa) (ZON2025-02B)

Issue:

The use table adopted at SMC 17.15.040 did not contemplate whether the Personal Services (Day Spa) use would be compatible in the R1 Single-family Residential District. At their regular meeting in September, 2025, the Planning Commission addressed whether this use would have been permitted had it been previously contemplated and whether it is compatible with the other listed uses in the district.

Guiding Policy

This interpretation is guided by SMC 17.12.020 which requires the following approval standards and considerations, for which affirmative findings are required before an unlisted use could be allowed.

- 1) SMC 17.12.020(C)(1) – The use is consistent with the purpose of the applicable zoning district;

AND
- 2) SMC 17.12.020(C)(2) – The use is expressly allowed in a less restrictive district;
OR
- 3) SMC 17.12.020(C)(3) – The use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in such district

AND
- 4) SMC 17.12.020(E)(1) – The proposed use serves a purpose customarily incidental to the instant principal use on the property under consideration.

Discussion

Use: The Personal Services (Day Spa) use is not described in SMC Chapter 17.13. The following is a working description: has the following description from SMC Chapter 17.13:

A Personal Services use providing services related to bodily relaxation, rejuvenation, or restoration. Examples include massage, hydrotherapy, facials, wet or dry saunas, steam rooms, float tanks, etc.

Zoning District: The purpose of the R1 Single-family Residential District is listed at SMC 17.15.020(A):

The single-family residential district (R1) is intended to provide minimum development standards for residential uses where complete community services are available and where residential uses are separated from uses characteristic of more urban and/or rural areas.

District Allowances: This use is not expressly allowed in any district (less restrictive or otherwise).

Character of Uses: In the R1 District, 29 uses are either permitted (P) or conditional (C). Personal Services is of the same general character as 5 of those uses [Ben & Breakfast (C), Hostel (C), Family Day Care Home (P), Mini-Day Care Center (C), Kennel (C)].

Instant Principal Use: Vacant properties have no instant principal use. There is no ability for an accessory use to be established where there is no principal use.

Findings

Based on the discussion below, the following findings are made:

- 1) The Professional Services (Day Spa) use is consistent with the purpose of the R1 Single-Family Residential District.
- 2) The Professional Services (Day Spa) use is not expressly allowed in a less restrictive district than the R1 District.
- 3) The Professional Services (Day Spa) use is of the same general character as the principal and conditional uses authorized in the R1 District.
- 4) The Professional Services (Day Spa) is not customarily incidental to vacant property, which have no instant principal use.

Interpretation:

In the R1 Single-family Residential District, the Professional Services (Day Spa) use satisfies the criteria of SMC 17.12.020(C)(1 & 3). As a result, the use may be allowed upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit.

For the Planning Commission:

Chair

Date



City of Stevenson

Planning Department

(509)427-5970

7121 E Loop Road, PO Box 371
Stevenson, Washington 98648

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Ben Shumaker
DATE: September 8th, 2025
SUBJECT: Vacation Rental Homes – Policies and Tools

Introduction

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

In April 2025, the City Council received a request from members of the public to alter this program. The request involved adding greater restrictions and new enforcement mechanisms. The City Council referred the policy analysis/development 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 square-one stage of the policy development and anticipates more involvement as draft policies and regulations are developed. In August 2025, the Planning Commission also established its data needs. Those needs are limited to the raw numbers and trends in licensing under the current program. They are satisfied proceeding without economic analysis or tax collection-related data. In August 2025, an ad hoc subcommittee of 2 Planning Commissioners met with City staff to recommend next steps.

This report reviews the recommendations of the subcommittee.

Previous meeting documents and recordings are available online at <https://www.ci.stevenson.wa.us/meetings>.

Recommended Action

The subcommittee recommends the following next steps:

- 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

Policy Intent

The table below lists the public purposes to be served by the recommended vacation rental licensing program. These purposes include a policy rationale describing why the public purpose is believed appropriate for Stevenson at the current time. The rationale should be considered draft until the full Planning Commission recommends it for City Council review.

August 2025 Subcommittee Proposal	
Public Purpose	Policy Rationale
Preserve Housing Availability	Operating a home as a vacation rental home is a profitable endeavor, typically more so than as a long-term rental or personal residence. Investors seeking to avail themselves of this profit purchase homes to be operated as vacation rental homes, effectively removing them from the housing stock. Regulations are necessary to ensure the City's limited housing stock remains available for long-term residents (owners & renters). City intervention is necessary to preserve housing availability.
Maintain Neighborhood Character	<p>"Neighborhoods are for neighbors." Vacation rental homes disrupt neighborhoods in 2 ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term guests and outside investors in vacation rental homes have weak social bonds with the long-term residents of our neighborhoods. Typical long-term residents develop community, and members of a community care for each other in ways short-term guests do not. Neighborhood disruptions occur but occur within a social compact that does not exist with short-term renters. • Vacation rental homes leave neighborhoods hollow. This is true during periods when they are vacant. This leaves fewer "eyes on the street" performing neighborhood watch functions. Vacant periods coincide with the "famine" period of the "feast of famine" cycle experienced by our tourism-/service-oriented businesses. Even when occupied, vacation rental homes do not send children to schools, contribute to declining enrollments. <p>City intervention is necessary to limit the impact vacation rental homes have on their neighbors and the character of the City's neighborhoods.</p>
Ensure Market Fairness and Taxation	Owners of vacation rental homes participate in a marketplace with legacy types of overnight accommodations (hotels, hostels, campgrounds, etc.). Regulatory consistency and different taxation mechanisms play out on a playing field that is not always level. The industry has largely addressed earlier issues involving the non-collection/remittance of lodging and sales & use taxes. It is still grappling with the vacation rental home owners' payment of business & occupation taxes. Vacation rental homes and legacy accommodation types are subject to different building codes, utility rates, and regulatory controls. City intervention is necessary to level the playing field and ensure collection of taxes.
Protect Guests	While they are here, short-term guests are residents of the Stevenson community. They deserve protection from hazards to their life, health, and safety. The joint-review nature of the industry protects against many such hazards; few new bookings will occur if past reviews dwell on the hole in the floor/or other hazard. Some limited City intervention is necessary to protect guests from less obvious hazards to life, health, and safety.
Reduce Administrative Burden	Administrative burdens should be avoided. This assists vacation rental home owners to more easily operate consistent with City interventions. It also assists City staff who must perform their duties related to vacation rental homes alongside the duties required in the provision of several other City services. City intervention should result in a program that is manageable for the regulators and the regulated.
Provide Effective Barriers to Entry	In balance with the administrative burdens of implementation, owners entering into the vacation rental marketplace should fully understand that marketplace and provide quality experiences for their guests.
Benefit Economy	Ownership of a vacation rental home can be lucrative. The benefits of this should not be reserved for the home owner, but spread to other services providers.

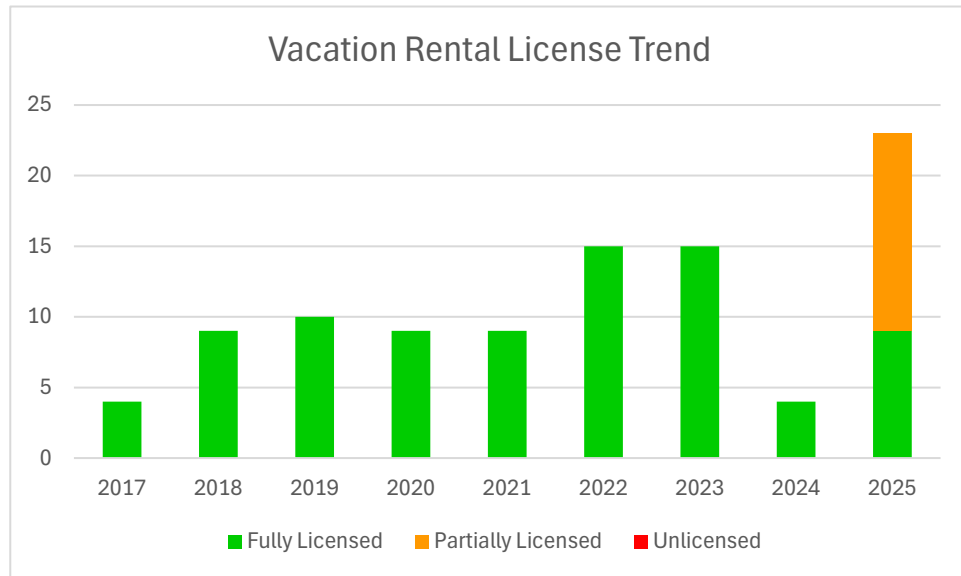
Regulatory Tools

The table below lists the tools to be employed to achieve each of the public purposes.

August 2025 Subcommittee Proposal								
		Preserve Housing Availability	Maintain Neighborhood Character	Ensure Market Fairness and Taxation	Protect Guests	Reduce Administrative Burden	Provide Effective Barriers to Entry	Benefit Economy
Current Interventions to Continue		Purposes Advanced						
Annual License Renewal			X	X			X	
Revocable License			X		X		X	
Neighborhood Notice			X			X	X	
Local Management			X		X	X	X	X
Interior Informational Posting			X		X	X		
Added Parking Standards			X		X			
Complaint Log/Action Log			X			X	X	
Fire Code Compliance				X	X		X	X
Taxation		X	X	X			X	
New Interventions to Consider								
Proof of Residency		X	X				X	
On-site Ownership Preference		X	X		X	X	X	
Cumulative License Cap		X	X				X	
Individual Licensee Cap		X	X				X	
District-Specific Allowance		X	X				X	
Water Shutoff Penalty		X				X		
Private Inspections				X	X		X	X
Current Interventions to Remove								
Staff Inspections				X	X		X	

Licensing Trends

The figure below provides tracks fully licensed vacation rental home operations from 2017 to 2025. The data for the current year also includes partially licensed operations, which are paying their license fee to the Washington Department of Revenue (14), but—unlike the fully licensed (9) operations—have not completed all associated city paperwork. No operations were found which were entirely unlicensed. In 2025, 7 of the 23 licenses are held by out-of-town owners.



Prepared by,

Ben Shumaker
Community Development Director

Attachment

1- Subcommittee Report

Short Term Rental Discussion Notes

PC subcommittee of Lawson, Hales, Shumaker

8/21/2025

Memo to Council noting community interest in the topic and PC's belief that Stevenson should update the policy and its administration. PC has identified what we believe should be key policy elements and if Council directs, we will proceed in this direction and prepare ordinance language to review, hold a hearing, amend if appropriate, and forward to Council for consideration and approval.

Primary factors driving this initiative:

- Loss of livability if Stevenson become oversaturated with short term rentals (STRs)
- Reduction in housing available for long-term residential use
- Need to try to assure basic fire and life safety in STR units
- Spotty compliance with current requirements
- Need to simplify and focus our regs on the most critical issues, and improve ease of administration

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN UPDATED POLICY:

- A **numerical cap** on the total number of units that can be granted permits, based on consideration of the current number and the objective of keeping total below about 5% of total housing units in the City
- No new **non-resident owners**. Existing non-resident owners grandfathered if registered by 90 days after effective date of revised ordinance
- New and subsequent licensees must have their **primary residence** in the City of Stevenson
- **One unit** per licensee
- Licenses are **not transferable**

- Basic fire and life safety **inspection** conducted and reported to the City from a list of locally-available private inspectors.
- Ongoing **management requirements** once licensed, including occupancy limits, prompt response to complaints, and criteria for revocation of the license